XVII
OLD GERMAN

Vicente Blasco Ibañez

THE

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XVII. OLD GERMAN

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			PAGE
DCCCI.	Who could have Believed It?	*Anonymous*	208
DCCCII.	Antonello the Gondolier	*Franz von Gaudy*	212
DCCCIII.	The Severed Hand	*Wilhelm Hauff*	223
DCCCIV.	The Blue Apron	*Johann Gabriel Seidl*	234
DCCCV.	His Serenity and the Thunderstorm	*Fritz Reuter*	240
DCCCVI.	Tonele	*Berthold Auerbach*	247
DCCCVII.	Clumsy	,, ,,	255
DCCCVIII.	My Grandfather's Wedding	*Hermann Kurz*	263
DCCCIX.	In the Great Hall	*Theodor W. Storm*	272
DCCCX.	Whither?	*Theodor Fontane*	277
DCCCXI.	The Barrowman of Griffelsbrunn	,, ,,	286
DCCCXII.	Nikisa	*Hermann Lingg*	289
DCCCXIII.	Wooing the Gallows	*W. Heinrich von Riehl*	299
DCCCXIV.	An Original	*Baroness von Ebner-Eschenbach*	308
DCCCXV.	The Sad Tale of Seven Kisses	*Richard Volkmann*	315
DCCCXVI.	The Fury	*Paul von Heyse*	317
DCCCXVII.	The Hungarian Countess	,, ,,	333
DCCCXVIII.	The Huntsman	,, ,,	347
DCCCXIX.	The Toilers of the Rocks	*Ferdinand von Saar*	356
DCCCXX.	Thou shalt not Kill	*Leopold von Sacher-Masoch*	373

OLD GERMAN STORY-TELLERS

LANGBEIN

With two short stories by Augustus Friedrich Langbein (1757–1835) this volume of the older German story-tellers appropriately begins. Appropriately, because in the first, " The Irreconcileable Man," the note of horror is tragically sounded, with full accompaniment of sentiment, and in the second, " The Lady's Palfrey," a whimsical light-heartedness predominates. And in the main it will be seen that the tragical-sentimental and the fanciful-grotesque are the prevailing notes in the short story of old Germany. Langbein himself, a Saxon, is remembered rather as a writer of light verse than as a prose writer, and his easy touch and pronounced attachment to witty and frivolous themes produced considerable entertainment for the reader. " The Lady's Palfrey " is a characteristic specimen of Langbein's talent, and with the triumphant absurdity of its climax displays his gifts to ready advantage. " The Irreconcileable Man " has none of its author's best-known qualities. It is the tragedy of temperament, the temperament of hate, told briefly, and only at the very end is the gloom lightened by an outburst of sentiment that promises in death the reconciliation denied in life.

SCHILLER

Johann Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) is of the world's immortals, and with Goethe is the crowned of all German imaginative writers for all time. But the varied and high genius of neither Goethe nor Schiller is

directed to the short story, and only in " The Sport of Destiny " can the latter be represented in this volume. Humour must not be expected in Schiller, great as his genius is seen. Possibly those six years of youth in the Duke of Würtemberg's school at Stuttgart, where the system of education was so efficiently maintained on the principles of the parade-ground, and the stiff formality of military drill governed the methods of the teacher and the conduct of the pupil, choked that fine sense of the incongruous in life we call humour. Perhaps from the first Schiller, with his natural reserve, his solitary habits, his calm detachment from the life around him, his want of human passion, his indifference to social affection, was disinclined from the cultivation of humour. Of a truth it is clear the author of *Wallenstein* and *William Tell*, of *The Robbers* and *The Song of the Bell*, had no mind for any mere play of exaggerated fancy on common elemental things, no relish for violent jokes, no taste for the unexpected eruptive sallies that set people laughing. " The Sport of Destiny " is a masterpiece in its way ; a character study wrought with rare simplicity of style, a story of ambition and its fall, on the old text of the fickleness of princes' favours. Only when the end is reached and the tale finished does the reader wake up to the fact that the author allows no place for love-making or marriage in " The Sport of Destiny."

JEAN PAUL AND OTHERS

To pass from Schiller to Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (1763–1825) is to leave a well-ordered, stately garden for the gloriously flowering meadow of the pageant of summer. Jean Paul, for so he signed his earlier work, teems with a humour irrepressible. He is a romanticist to whom form is nothing. The whimsical and the profound jostle and crowd his pages, and his riotous conceptions are often seen to bring forth much sound philosophy. With Jean Paul boisterous absurdity will serve as well as any other vehicle for the expression of some fine original thought, and the farcical disguise a parable for those who can discern. Thus Richter's " Van der Kabel's Last Will and Testament " must be read. It is wildly extravagant satire ; by no means to be counted as nonsense because the author refuses to prefer the method of solemnity for dealing with human foibles, and chooses rather to poke fun at his neighbours in his own vastly more entertaining way.

Three writers who lacked the genius of Jean Paul, but yet were justly accounted meritorious in their day, follow Richter. M. E. Engel (1764–1836), whose observant art, displayed in " Toby Wilt " and " Lady Elizabeth Hill," is concerned whimsically with the manners of provincial life in Swabia ; J. F. Kind (1768–1843), who in " The Beggar's Marriage Gift " allows the moralist to hold the stage, and gives full play to the

sentimental vein of the German story-teller; and August Gottlob Eberhardt (1769–1845), whose tale of "The Bet" is an admirable specimen of humour flavoured with sentiment. The two bishops, kindly in their cups, and yet for all their good-nature keenly alive to the main chance and the prospect of winning the bet, are excellent, while Conrad's problem and its solution happily provide sufficient sentiment.

ZSCHOKKE

From all the prolific literary output of J. Heinrich D. Zschokke (1771–1848) it is not easy to choose the best short stories, but the two here given, "The Broken Cup" and "How the Vicar came Round," have, we think, been well and wisely selected. Time has proved the enduring qualities of these capital stories. Their vivacity, imagination, and playful humour are abundant, and they are thoroughly typical of their author's style. Zschokke, who early migrated from Magdeburg, his native city, to reside in Switzerland, achieved an even greater popularity with his devotional poetry (*Stunden der Andacht*) than he did with his famous *Bilder aus der Schweiz*, or with that widely-read book, *Das Goldmacherdorf*. But it is as a writer of fiction, and of fiction modelled admittedly on the Waverley Novels, Zschokke is remembered to-day, and by the short stories here included we may judge his excellence.

GOTTSCHALCK AND TIECK

In "The Unlucky Miser," by Caspar Friedrich Gottschalck (*c.* 1772), a writer whom fame has long forsaken, and in "The Elves," by Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), foremost leader of the German romantic school, we have reached a change of form in the short story, and are face to face with the popular legend and folk-tale as the basis of the writer's art. "The Unlucky Miser" combines simplicity with the moral purpose so commonly found in popular legends, while "The Elves" (Carlyle's translation is the version here given), with its charm, its delicacy, and its pathos, gives us Ludwig Tieck at his best in the short story. Tieck, who never makes an excessive use of the supernatural in his romantic tales, manages in "The Elves" to invest with human feeling the Little People who belong not to this our world, but to the realms of fancy.

HOFFMANN

It is into the realm of the uncanny, however, that we are led by E. T. W. Hoffmann (1776–1822). This celebrated writer sat for many years as a judge of the Criminal Court in Berlin, and his stories are a peculiar blend of the ghostly, the chimerical, and the gruesome. Edgar

Allan Poe, who was certainly influenced by Hoffmann, surpasses him at times in the creation of an atmosphere of horror ; but Hoffmann's genius, on the other hand, can, with a touch of realism, a humorous illustration, a homely phrase, bring a wonderful vitality to the uncanny figures in his tales, and carry conviction to the reader that in spite of horrors the story may be true. Hoffmann's " The Cremona Violin " is at once wildly fantastic and horribly tragic. It brings out its author's wide musical knowledge, and is not devoid of a certain grim humour. The amazing triumph of the story is the effect of fidelity to life ; an effect maintained throughout all the queer happenings, and in spite of stark tragedy surpassing the common woe of mortals.

DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

" The Field of Terror," by De la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843), is a fine example of the work of the author of *Undine*. Fouqué relies on the supernatural, here as elsewhere, but he had the gift of endowing miraculous incidents with a peculiarly innocent charm, and of blending the natural and supernatural in a degree greater and more convincing than many of his German contemporaries. He outlived the reputation won by *Undine* by some twenty years, and in addition to that classic tale, " The Field of Terror " and a few other stories alone remain to testify to his genius.

BROTHERS GRIMM

All the world knows *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (published 1812), that marvellous collection of folk-tales, gathered with patient industry from countless sources. Here we include five gems from the treasury of the Brothers Grimm (Jakob, 1785–1863 ; Wilhelm, 1786–1859) : " Tom Thumb," " The Turnip," " The Twelve Dancing Princesses," " Pee-Wit," and " The Golden Goose." If in childhood we sought and found our pleasure in these tales, it is certain that age will also enjoy their rediscovery. For " Time cannot wither, nor custom stale the infinite variety " of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. The simplicity of style, the ingenious discomfitures of folly (as in " The Turnip "), the victory of wit and cunning over a thousand foes (as in " Tom Thumb " and " Pee-Wit "), render such tales as are here selected a joy for ever. These are not moral tales—certainly " Pee-Wit " is not—for their origins predate the Christian morality. Only in " The Golden Goose " is mere kindness of heart rewarded by a happy marriage with a king's daughter. " Pee-Wit " may be studied as an early contribution to the doctrine of superman. By sheer brain power Pee-Wit brings ruin and death to all who stand in his way, and with a lying wit not only escapes the violent death allotted to him, and provides a substitute, but turns that very substitute's death to his own account.

PRAETZEL—"LOTHAR"

Karl Gottlieb Praetzel (1785–1861) and the writer whom we know under the *nom de plume* "Lothar" (eighteenth century) have hardly survived contemporary fame. Yet Praetzel's "A Father's Authority" is capital comedy, excellent in its characterisation, and Lothar's "The Arch Rogue" and "Castle Christburg" are romantic tales of a high order; in the former the hero performs his tricks unaided by outside forces, while in the latter we are in the under-world of supernatural things.

ANONYMOUS TALES

The authorship of "Married or not Married?" "The Senator of Bremen," "Uncle's Will," and "Who could have Believed It?" remains unclaimed to this day. They are widely different—these four stories—in both style and subject-matter, and "The Senator of Bremen"—an old eighteenth-century tradition of that city—stands quite apart from the rest. Ingenious are these anonymous tales in their conception and motive. Close observation of manners reveals a secret marriage in the first. Marriage happily accomplished, and unhampered by conditions imposed by an uncle's will, the irksome conditions being cunningly outwitted, is the theme of the third. While in the last story a young Vienna noble falls in love with his own wife—"to such a dreadful extent may a man be led by one thoughtless step"!—to the mutual happiness of both.

GAUDY—HAUFF

A voluminous writer was the short-lived Franz von Gaudy (1800–1840), and while much of his work is necessarily forgotten, his story of "Antonello the Gondolier," pure fantasy with a queer semblance of reality, well deserves a lasting and honourable place in the library of imaginative fiction. Wilhelm Hauff (1802–1827), a Swabian, like Zschokke, looked to Sir Walter Scott as his master, but the influence of Hoffmann is equally marked in his admirable stories. Hauff's undoubted genius for fiction never ripened to maturity; we see the possibilities in such a story as "The Severed Hand." The writer has a story to tell, and tells it lucidly and in singularly attractive style.

SEIDL AND FRITZ REUTER

In "The Blue Apron," by Johann Gabriel Seidl (1804–1875), and still more in Fritz Reuter's work, we can note the influence of Dickens. If "The Blue Apron" has none of the uproarious fun that the genius of Dickens revelled in, it has, brief as it is, all that tenderness for sorrow and affliction, that charity that thinketh no evil, and that sympathy with

patient suffering and with the innocence of youth that we recognise in the art of the creator of Little Nell and her Grandfather. "His Serenity and the Thunderstorm," by Fritz Reuter (1810–1874), strikes the more humorous note; the lively contrast between the characters of the stout-hearted, God-fearing old Konrektor and his Serene Highness the Duke, and the nonsensical panic of the latter in the presence of the thunderstorm, provide a most diverting entertainment. Reuter, for all his long imprisonment, when a student, at the hands of the Prussian Government, an imprisonment that ruined his life, never lost the saving gift of humour, and retains, deservedly, a high popularity for his descriptive stories of his native province of Mecklenburg.

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

A genuine realist, knowing the country-side through and through, Berthold Auerbach (1812–1882) is unrivalled in his studies of peasant life on the Swabian side of the Black Forest. He made his name in 1843 with a volume of village stories—"Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten." Both "Tonele" and "Clumsy" are stories of broken love and disappointed passion, not unworthy of our own Thomas Hardy. "Tonele," indeed, is sheer tragedy, and if the ending of "Clumsy" is less mournful, its pathos is keener. The test of time has proved the real talent of Berthold Auerbach, and his peasant characters are as alive in their ill-fortune to-day as they were in the middle of the nineteenth century.

HERMANN KURZ

The art of what has been called the Swabian school of German fiction is well maintained by Hermann Kurz (1813–1873), whose tale of "My Grandfather's Wedding" is perhaps the happiest of the author's many short stories. The amazement of the villagers at the sight of the heroine's parrot, and their efforts to remove what they imagined was an artificial colouring, till the unfortunate bird succumbed to the various hot and cold washings with soap and soda inflicted on it, make but an incident in the story of the wooing of the lively Salome, but it is an uncommonly funny incident, sorrow as we may for the parrot's sufferings. Kurz was not in the main a writer of fiction, though two historical romances from his pen were popular in their day; to the translation of other men's work—notably *Orlando Furioso*—most of his literary life was given. Nevertheless his talent for short-story writing is not to be denied.

THEODOR STORM

Primarily a poet of nature and still life, Theodor W. Storm (1817–1888) was in fiction a romanticist. Nowhere is the prose of Storm more

delicately shaped than in this sketch of old-fashioned family life, "In the Great Hall." The sentiment of the grandmother's story of her childhood and courtship has, as it were, an aroma of lavender, as of some well-preserved raiment that has long lain in seclusion to be brought forth on high occasion ; and brought forth it is found as beautiful and dainty as ever. The charm of the story is in its setting no less than in its telling ; and it is the charm of a day that is past, reminiscent of love's young dream and of far-off things. No hint of coming stress or trouble clouds the picture of family happiness. No intrusion of realism is allowed to mar the gaiety of the scene. " Happily and contentedly " the grandmother has come to old age, and her one prayer is that her granddaughter may enjoy a like happiness and contentment.

FONTANE

To pass from Storm to his contemporary Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) is to leave the quiet of a well-ordered country house for the cheerful bustle of the city. Fontane is the novelist of Berlin life, the pioneer of the modern German novel, a typical late nineteenth-century Berlin man of letters. His literary method changed with the years. It was only step by step he moved from historical romance to realism, and not till 1895, when his masterpiece *Effi Briest*, was published, was it seen how fully Fontane had been influenced by the French school of realists. Slight as are the two sketches here included, " Whither ? " and " The Barrowman of Griffelsbrunn," they are sufficient examples of Fontane's lighter touch, his humour, observation, and mastery of character. The humour is spontaneous, the conversation bubbles up in natural fashion, and flows on without let or hindrance. The characters are alive, people to be met every day, and Fontane makes us see how amusing everyday life is to the observer, and how good the play that is daily enacted before our eyes.

HERMANN LINGG—VON RIEHL

Accounted a poet of no mean ability in his day, Hermann Lingg (1820–1905) produced a very limited amount of prose work. His fiction was of the romantic-historical order, and his style may well be judged from this tale of " Nikisa," where the rich vein of sentiment, the Eastern colouring, the dramatic episodes, and the appropriate ending are all used by the author in his accustomed way. Lingg in his *Novellen* proved himself a story-teller, and left it at that.

An historical novelist of vastly different style from Lingg is Wilhelm Heinrich von Riehl (1823–1897). A native of South Germany, and by far the most brilliant writer of short stories in the Munich circle of his day, Riehl has a mastery of character and humour. His " Wooing the

Gallows "—a short story of the sixteenth century—is as full of wit as it is of humanity, and is a joyful satire on the cruelty and folly of petty provincial rulers.

EBNER-ESCHENBACH

Only one woman writer of short stories has a place in this volume—Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (1830–1916), whose sketches of Austrian high life (notably *Die Freiherren von Gemperlein*, 1881, and *Zwei Contessen*, 1885) were immensely popular in their time, and may still be enjoyed by the reader. With the publication of *Ein Spatgeborener* in 1875, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach established her fame, and the originality of her wit and satire were at once applauded. " An Original," the story here presented, has strength and reality, and its pathos is entirely genuine and sincere. As a character study, Gabriel Teufenberg, the subject of the story, is a remarkable piece of work, shaded and completed with wonderful skill. The awakening from a life preoccupied and indifferent to surroundings, the sudden tragedy and the relapse, with " the old chill light in his eyes " and the extinguishing of " the flame that illumined and warmed him," are set out with a power as rare as it is excellent, and make " An Original " a short story curiously impressive.

VOLKMANN

" The Sad Tale of Seven Kisses," by Richard Volkmann (1830–1891), belongs to the realms of fancy, where imagination plays queer tricks, and all sorts of quaint and unexpected things happen. The tale is short and may be read as allegory or fable ; the moral being that lovers' wishes must not be lightly granted. The quaintness of the idea and the delicacy of the treatment give high value to " The Sad Tale."

VON HEYSE

Paul von Heyse (1830–1914) may, on the whole, be called the most versatile German writer of the nineteenth century. Both in prose and verse he maintained a high standard, and he is to be seen at his best in some of his short novels, and in especial in the writing descriptive of Italian life, where the " beauty and poetry of conquering passion " are displayed by Heyse with all an artist's cunning. In such a story as " The Fury "—or " L'Arrabiata "—(the first of the three chosen specimens of Heyse's art) we have the Italian scenery and the burning " conquering passion " of youth in love, passion consummated in triumphant happiness. In the second story, " The Hungarian Countess," passion triumphs temporarily, and ends in tragedy. In notable contrast are

these two tales, save for the common note of passion. The one is all warmth and sunshine, the other gloom and winter. The third tale, that of "The Huntsman," illustrates the diversity of the author's gifts: it is an incident in a deerstalker's day in the German Alps, told with an engaging simplicity rare in Von Heyse, and the element of human passion is conspicuously absent.

VON SAAR

Contemporary with Von Heyse, and manifesting the same deep sympathy with rustic life and the humblest actors in the world's great tragi-comedy, was Ferdinand von Saar (1833–1906), the eminent Austrian novelist and poet. "The Toilers of the Rocks" is the best example of his work in the short-story vein. It opens with a fine feeling of tragic gloom, and develops with the inevitableness of great drama, providing a wonderfully vivid picture of a little-known phase of labouring life, and ending on the note of joy.

SACHER-MASOCH

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1835–1895), the last of our German story-tellers, was born at Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, and the best of his tales are studies and sketches of Galician life, illuminated by a kindly, tolerant humour and a wide sympathy. "Thou shalt not Kill" is concerned with two Jewish admirers of a certain Croatian Countess, who are only restrained from fighting a duel by the urgent and humane appeal of the Rabbi. The point of the story is that the insult that provoked the challenge was the one calling the other a Jew! Sacher-Masoch, a man of notable learning, and in his longer fictions strangely decadent, almost to perversion, held a professorship at Lemberg. He was by birth a "Little Russian," and it is pleasant to note that he cannot help poking fun at the egregious but malevolent German historian, Treitschke, in this delightful little story—a story that well writes *Finis* to the older German fiction.

It will be observed, and surely approved, that none of the German writers whose work is characteristic of the Prussianised or Hunnish era have been admitted to the company of this volume. J. C.

AUGUSTUS FRIEDRICH LANGBEIN

1757–1835

THE IRRECONCILEABLE MAN

Away with insults, hate, oppression;
Reach me still the friendly hand;
Soon we part unreconciled,
Travellers to a distant land.
Feel we not life's bridge beneath us,
Trembling 'mid the o'erwhelming tide?
See how fast it rushes over!
Say we loved before we died.

With these words the unfortunate Councillor Lambert despatched an appealing letter to President Dornfeld, one who had been formerly his inseparable friend and companion, but who had become estranged, and was now even one of his bitterest foes. Their acquaintance had commenced at college; amidst study or amusement they were ever at each other's side; and it was only the self-willed and somewhat overbearing disposition of Dornfeld that had, at any time, interrupted their mutual regard; but they were always reconciled in a few hours. And it was Lambert's gentle and noble feelings which usually led to this reconciliation; he recovered his friend's affection and esteem without humbling himself to his whims.

Their friendship followed them into the affairs of life, and, what is more, continued during the space of ten years after they left college. Although greatly inferior to his friend, both in knowledge and in talent, Dornfeld had the advantage in point of wealth and influence, and by such a lever quickly assumed a situation in life somewhat higher than the former. This, however, was assigned to its real cause, and pronounced unjust; but Lambert was rejoiced at his friend's good fortune, and it only served to increase their attachment.

They had severally attained to the age of thirty-five, connected together in all their pursuits; but a dark cloud hung over them, and love it was that threw the apple of discord across their path. On the same day, and in the same hour, they beheld the beautiful Amelia, and both left the house where they had seen her with a burning secret in their breasts.

It was the first they had kept from each other, for both were deeply smitten, and it was long that night before they could close their eyes. They had leisure enough to think of the lovely lady; they had never seen any so attractive and beautiful; and their whole thoughts were occupied with the means of again seeing her, and if possible of engaging her affections. Each proceeded in his own way, without a word confided to the other, to accomplish the end he had in view.

Dornfeld, whose busy influence had already raised him to the level of nobility, considered wealth and rank as possessing the most irresistible attractions for the female heart. He imagined that a man of his vast consequence must be the object of admiration and of the secret wishes of all young unmarried ladies whom he knew. Under this impression, his attentions to Amelia betrayed anything but diffidence and doubt; he appeared to make quite sure of success from the first, while his manner expressed all the confidence and triumph which he really felt. His proposal assumed the air of condescension, and he could not conceal his astonishment on receiving a refusal. He left her highly offended; his admiration was converted into a feeling of hatred and desire for revenge.

Amelia's heart was already won by the more gentle and modest assiduities of his friend. He had displayed little or nothing, indeed, of those shining qualities so highly valued by the vain; but his every word and action were the evidence of a gentle and noble mind, which drew its source from the purest and best feelings of our nature. It was thus their mutual esteem ripened into love; their thoughts and feelings knit in unison together; and Amelia's parents approved her choice.

Delighted beyond his hopes, Lambert hastened to acquaint his friend, entreating his attendance at their marriage in quality of bridegroom's man. Imagine the chagrin and astonishment of the new President (for he was just made President of Council) on hearing this request. He leapt from his chair, and loudly inveighed against Amelia's character.

In a fit of scorn and passion, he likewise betrayed his own secret, until then unknown even to his friend, and concluded by beseeching him, as he valued their long friendship, not to prosecute his suit; to abandon one scornful woman out of pity to the agony of his feelings; and that everything he had in the world he might consider as his own.

"Ah, you require too much, my dear Dornfeld," replied his friend. "Do not refuse me possession of a blessing which Fortune has denied you; think how many others you possess—as I would have done were she about to become yours."

"Nay, do not imagine I am going to hang myself," cried Dornfeld with a bitter laugh; "it is not that, but the scornful simpleton

ought to be well punished for her airs; and you, my noble friend, can do it. Let us be revenged upon her heartless pride; for my sake, draw back, and let her die an old maid! "

Lambert, while he expressed his surprise and sorrow at such words, attempted to inspire him with nobler feelings, and to dissuade him from all idea of taking revenge where no injury had been intended. Yet he could not in the least soften him. Dornfeld insisted upon revenge; and spoke as if he were extorting it from a slave. Lambert then directly declared that he was free, and should please himself, without binding himself down to the consent of any one.

" Do it at your risk," thundered Dornfeld, while scorn and rage shot from his eyes. Without deigning a reply, Lambert turned his back upon him, and walked away.

Not long after this separation followed the nuptials of Lambert and the lovely Amelia. Out of respect, the name of President Dornfeld was never omitted from their cards of invitation to their friends; but he never came.

This scornful conduct served the President as a declaration of hostility. He even broke off all communication with his old friend; and when Lambert once called to inquire after his health, the President being unwell, Dornfeld's servant was told to order him from the door.

Nor was he content with this; he opposed him in public, and in all his affairs, crossing him on every side, and dogging his steps, like an evil spirit, resolved to embitter his whole existence. This he was, likewise, enabled to do, owing to their respective situations in the Council. The most heavy and laborious share fell to the lot of Councillor Lambert. A sort of conspiracy was at work against him; yet he cheerfully persevered in his duties, though he had hardly an hour's relaxation that he could call his own. He was employed in writing incessantly, often whole nights as well as days. It hurt him, however, to find that his best exertions were not appreciated, that they were even reviled, and rejected in favour of those of known inferior worth.

Yet the President's opposition and aversion did not stop here. He spoke ill of the Councillor in all societies where he could venture to do so; and on one occasion, when it was expected that Lambert would be raised to a higher rank in the Legislature, and one of greater profit, such were the representations made to the Prince that another was elected, and all his just hopes of promotion disappointed.

Until this occurrence, he had borne all the insults that had been heaped upon him with patience. But he was now the father of a family, and he began to find his means inadequate to their support. He had never wished to become the enemy of the President; he had never retaliated; and now more than ever he wished to

become reconciled for the sake of his family, as he found that Dornfeld had both power and inclination to injure him.

So he resolved to come to an open explanation with his bitter and unrelenting foe, and wrote the letter mentioned at the commencement of this account. He sent it, but received no answer, while he still continued to receive the same harsh and ungenerous usage at his persecutor's hands. He had then recourse to other methods of resisting or of softening Dornfeld's hostility; but they proved equally abortive. Here was only a fresh source of triumph to the President, who loudly boasted of it among his friends and dependents.

"Councillor Lambert had humbled himself before his rival; he had resisted, and he was now in disgrace." And there, he had the unfeeling malice to add, he would leave him, as a punishment for venturing to become his rival—would leave him, without giving him a helping hand, though he lay there until the day of judgment!

About the same time, Lambert was sitting one evening engaged as usual at his desk; suddenly, one of his most intimate college friends, Councillor von Buhren, entered his apartment. His manner was hurried, and his features bore traces of strong emotion.

"My best friend," he cried, half out of breath, "I am in one of the most awkward predicaments you can imagine; to you only I look for support. I am just now in want of five hundred dollars; my life and honour are both at stake; save me, I beseech you."

Lambert expressed his astonishment; for Buhren did not stand first in the list of his friends. On the contrary, he was extremely intimate with the President; and, till this moment, had either slighted or given him proofs of the ill-will of the latter. Yet the weakness of Lambert's heart was not able to resist the appeal of one apparently in distress; and he did not even reproach him. He sought to console him in the most friendly manner, declaring he would have been glad to assist him had it been in his power; but for a truth he did not possess the tenth part of that sum just then.

This was the simple fact, though he had cash in his possession to a much higher amount, some of which he was employed in counting. Now Buhren, though aware that it was public property, still persisted in his lamentations and prayers, beseeching that possession of the money would save him from despair.

"No; excuse me," said Lambert; "I would myself prefer dying of hunger to touching the least portion of any property entrusted to my hands."

Notwithstanding this honourable avowal, the other persisted in his entreaties, taking a most solemn oath that he would restore the sum without fail, within eight days, threatening at the same time to despatch himself, if Lambert did not consent.

The kind-hearted Lambert was greatly distressed between his

feelings of duty and compassion. The last at length obtained the victory, and he tried to reconcile it to his conscience, by thinking that Buhren was one of the President's chief favourites, and would be able to smooth the way, more than any one else he knew, to a final reconciliation with Dornfeld. Full of this hope, he opened the iron chest with a trembling hand, and took out a bag of five hundred dollars.

" Behold, then," he cried, " I am now doing that for you which nothing on earth would induce me to think of doing for myself. Breathe it not to any one, but keep your word, and restore me the money, or you will assuredly ruin me."

Buhren embraced him in the excess of his gratitude, and hastened home with the money.

Overwhelmed with business, Lambert had no time to indulge in reflections upon the possible consequences of what he had done. He again sat down to his desk, and wrote without interruption until midnight. At length, however, uneasy feelings began to prey upon his mind; and the thought of having disposed of property entrusted to his hands now filled him with alarm and remorse. He could not sleep, for, when he closed his eyes, unpleasant dreams haunted his rest, and he fancied he beheld himself in chains and wasting in a dungeon. He rose at the break of day, like some wretch released from the rack. In his anxiety, he could remain in no one place; he went out to find one of his most faithful friends, and to him he communicated the cause of his unhappiness, and entreated his advice.

" Bad, very bad," said his friend, shaking his head; " you have permitted your goodness of heart to blind your understanding. We can do nothing but provide, as soon as possible, against the worst that can happen, and replace instantly the amount you have advanced."

" There is the difficulty—I have no means," replied Lambert.

" Then I will tell you how," continued his friend; " I am barely master of five hundred at this moment; but in two hours they shall be at your disposal. So give yourself no further anxiety about it. I will send the money to your house; go home."

Lambert thanked him, and went away. It was hardly eight o'clock when he returned. On entering the room, he found two state officers of rank with his Amelia, waiting for him. He was startled at the sight; and they requested to speak with him alone. They then submitted to his inspection an order from the Government for an examination of the amount of cash entrusted to his care. It met his eyes like a thunderbolt, and he had nearly fainted in his chair. It was only the consciousness of having committed no premeditated villainy that supported him. He opened the coffers, and acquainted the officers with the sum of money that was wanting—(concealing the name of Buhren) and besought them not

to make the affair public, as it was certain of being replaced within a very few hours.

They only shrugged their shoulders by way of answer, took particulars of all the other sums, put the royal seal upon the coffers, and went their way, without committing themselves by any promise.

Two hours afterwards, Lambert's friend sent him the five hundred according to agreement. But at the same moment entered an officer of police, who handed him the order for his arrest, and a sentinel was placed before his door. It was now made evident that the President was in the plot, and directed every movement. Lambert instantly wrote to him in an indignant tone:

"I know you, my Lord President!—you are the sole author of all my misfortunes. You plotted the vile conspiracy of which I am made the victim, by means of your creature, Councillor Buhren. My intention, much injured as I have been, was to hold out to you once more the right hand of fellowship, and I hoped I was conferring a favour upon you by assisting your favourite Buhren in his misfortunes. *You* have rewarded me by disgrace and imprisonment. When will your revenge be satisfied? Surely you are not quite lost to humanity. Free me from the net in which you have entangled me! You can do it; you can stem the flood of ruin before I am engulfed. Think that I only disposed of the money, during a few hours, and to serve a friend of yours."

No answer was returned, though it was intended, on the ensuing day, to remove the sentinel from his door, serving an order at the same time upon the prisoner, to forbid his entrance into the Council chamber, and removing him from the office he enjoyed. The affair quickly took wind, and Lambert was everywhere held up as an unprincipled man, unworthy of the confidence of Government, all which greatly surprised the people.

When he had been submitted to this species of moral torture for about a month, he received the following letter from one of his few faithful friends:

"I am this moment informed that your destiny is decided. The prosecution against you will be dropped; but you will be deprived of your rank and offices. Yet President Dornfeld has it in his power to rescue you from this last degrading punishment, if you apply to him; there is not a moment to be lost. To-morrow it will be too late."

Lambert was no longer proof against such a blow, it fell too heavily upon him, and he felt that he could never survive it. He had no hope in appealing to the stony heart of the President, yet it was his last resource; his family were on the edge of ruin; so he sat down once more in the bitterness of his soul, wrote, and despatched his letter by a trusty messenger whom he not only entreated to put it into the President's own hand, but to beseech him to read it, for that it was a matter of life or death.

Dornfeld was that day engaged in celebrating his birthday with a party of friends. It was already evening, and the Lord President was seated at the card-table when the messenger arrived. He took the letter and put it unopened into his pocket, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of Lambert's bearer to consult the contents upon the spot. "There will be time enough," he answered, and gave it not a second thought.

About eleven o'clock the party left the cards and went to supper. Among the costly drinking vessels which decorated the tables was a grand crystal vase that had been presented to the President many years ago by Lambert on his birthday. What is more, the names of the donor and the receiver were to be seen in gold characters, apparent to every eye: it had never before been permitted to appear; and strange that it should be thus exposed, strange, thought every one, that the President's feelings could sustain such a sight.

An uneasy and indescribable kind of emotion was felt by all present, which they sought to banish by forced gaiety, and, as the clock tolled twelve, the host, according to an old German custom, filled the vase with wine, to be passed round from guest to guest.

Just as the Lord President was going to drink a health to his friends, and touched the edge of the crystal with his lips, a sharp, shrill sound struck his ear, and rung with a tremulous tone round the glass. It was heard by all the guests with an exclamation of surprise; the vase was examined by the lights, and a flaw was visible in it, running through the part where Lambert's name appeared upon the crystal.

The letter now occurred to Dornfeld's memory, and he shuddered; he had already had it for more than six hours in his pocket. He rose from the table, and went into another room to peruse it. He broke the seal and read:

"I stand upon the brink of a precipice, between life and death. The tidings I have just heard, that I am to-morrow, without trial, to be deprived of my means of livelihood, and overwhelmed with disgrace, to be ranked only in the list of beggars, has brought me to the close of my career, and I am resolved to free myself from my sufferings by one resolute effort. This, Dornfeld, is your work; but there is yet time to snatch me from inevitable fate; and you will, you must, do it, Dornfeld, if a drop of human blood yet courses in your veins. Send me, then, as a token of your goodwill, one word subscribed with your name, and let it be '*Yes!*' I will wait most patiently for this single word of comfort until midnight. Yet do not delay it longer, as you would not in future wish to associate your birthday with the day of my death. For the morning will never shine upon *me* which is to hold me up as an adjudged criminal to the world."

Now for the first time, Dornfeld felt the pangs of conscience; he

looked at his watch: it was past midnight, and he dreaded the worst. In an agony of remorse, terrific as it was sudden, he rushed out, in order to prevent a deed which seemed to threaten to stamp his forehead, like that of Cain, with the indelible mark of murderous shame.

He was too late: that deed was already done. Before Lambert's residence he found assembled a crowd of neighbouring people, who had been drawn thither by the report of a pistol. With his hands over his face, Dornfeld, without asking a single question, made his way through the crowd.

Loud and bitter lamentations smote his ear as he entered: guided only by such sounds, he found his way to the fatal chamber: and, with the impulse of agony and despair, he opened the door. The body of Lambert, bathed in blood, was the first object that met his sight: Amelia, his wife, was kneeling, convulsed with heart-breaking sobs and moans, before the couch on which he lay. She heard some one approaching; she looked round, as if expecting to behold a spirit, and there upon the threshold stood the deadly enemy of the deceased. He drew nigh, but she motioned him wildly away, for she could not speak; yet he came nearer, and then she made an effort: " I beseech you to be gone!—the blood of my husband is crying out for vengeance to Heaven: save yourself—fly! "

He felt as if the voice of the Omnipotent were addressing him; and trembling, he obeyed. He hastened back to his own house, but he had not courage to take leave of his guests. He sent word to them that he had been taken suddenly unwell; and concealed himself from every eye as if he had been convicted and shunned by all.

The fate of Lambert was universally commiserated; the real cause of his afflicting end remained no secret. Every humane and honest man avoided the President's society. His rank protected him, indeed, from open punishment; but a more terrific species of justice took possession of his breast, and condemned him never more to experience peace upon earth. Sorrow and remorse consumed him; and only insanity came to his relief.

At length he imagined he was incessantly pursued by the angry spirit of his friend. Often was he heard wildly conversing with it aloud, and always in a beseeching tone, stretching out his hands in supplication; and then he would break out into the ravings of despair, and beat his head against the walls of his cell, crying out that he would never, never be reconciled!

Years did he continue in this state; and often his keepers were compelled to have him chained down to his bed, until the powers of nature being at length exhausted, he was suddenly restored to perfect reason for a few moments, uttered a prayer, and feebly adding, " He is reconciled! " he died.

AUGUSTUS FRIEDRICH LANGBEIN

THE LADY'S PALFREY

THERE was once a good-natured monarch who never so much as dreamed of vexing the least of his subjects; and yet he did not please them. He was too easy in the exercise of his royal prerogative, and treated them rather like spoiled children than hirelings and apprentices, until they began to think of assembling in parliament, like the frogs, and of petitioning Jupiter to grant them a proper king.

The truth is, that State business boasted less attractions than a very handsome young lady of the Court, named Adelaide, who had made herself complete mistress of the young King's heart, as well as of his time. Such was her influence over him, that some of the old Privy Councillors began to take alarm, and tried every courtly means of enticing him out of the paradise which he seemed to enjoy in her society; for it was not without a good deal of difficulty that they could prevail with him even to take the trouble of signing his name to a sentence of execution.

To most State ministers, perhaps, this bitter aversion to business might have been highly agreeable, and they would have turned his delegated authority to very good account. But these belonged to that more rare class of statesmen who have rather a dislike to office, and who discharge its functions purely for the benefit of the people. They were only ambitious of rousing the royal young lover from his trance and inspiring him with a sense of his dignity—to wield his sceptre with becoming majesty and power, so as to convince his subjects that they had a king.

They assembled, therefore, and laid their heads together in a cabinet council, the result of which was to delegate one of the oldest and wisest of their sapient body to bear their grievances and remonstrances to the ear of their enchanted young Prince. Now, Privy Councillor Alphonso, the ambassador on this occasion, was no sneaking, soft-tongued old courtier, who would hardly venture to call his soul his own; but bold, blunt, stiff, and unbending as a poker, he marched forthwith to seek an audience, and roundly stated the object of his visit. He declared in the most earnest manner, with due commendations on the virtues of princes who never neglected their royal duties, that both the capital and the

country were beginning to feel very much dissatisfied with his style of governing, or rather of not governing at all.

They thought it odd enough, he continued, that his attachment to a single girl should absorb that due to all his people, for whom he did not seem to care a jot. Indeed, it was thought that he would not give his little finger to save all his subjects from eternal damnation; such was the perfect indifference he displayed towards them, as well as to his own royal dignity, to the power and splendour of a crown.

The Prince seemed quite dumfounded at these serious charges, and it was clear that his conscience was at work, for he had not a word to say in interruption. He listened earnestly to the whole sermon, which insisted greatly on the necessity of industry, temperance, self-control, and other great and princely virtues of that kind. " Very true, my good Alphonso," replied the good-natured monarch, " only I fear you have never been in love."

The old minister, with a shrug of his shoulders, confessed that he had never yet found time to fall in love. At the same time, having delivered his sermon, he took his leave, shaking his head as if he entertained no great hope of reaping any harvest from the good seed which he had just sown.

For once, however, the wise old counsellor was mistaken; the Prince awoke, as it were, out of a dream, became sensible of his royal duties, and never went near his beloved during the next three days. Meanwhile it would be impossible to form an idea of the number of tears shed by Adelaide as she sat in her lonely chamber. She was the living picture of grief, until about the fourth day, finding it began to border upon despair, she conceived that it would be the most prudent course, before she made a noose of her garter, to pay the young monarch a visit. He uttered an exclamation of surprise on beholding her in his royal presence, and at his feet, before he had a suspicion of her approach, softly inquiring *how* she could have offended him.

Touched to the very soul at her words, the Prince pressed the weeping beauty to his breast.

" Adelaide, my own Adelaide," he cried, " pray be calm. You are an excellent girl, and you have not vexed me at all. I love you as much as ever, and shall never cease to love you; only I must not, I dare not, see you any more."

This was at once delight and torture to Adelaide's heart; his first words were balsam, but his last were daggers. A flood of tears was her only reply, for her grief was too great for utterance. At length, with an abundance of broken sighs, she sobbed out:

" You would see me no more! and yet assure me of your love! —would you hand me a bowl of poison garnished with roses? Away with such flowers for sorrow, and tell me frankly that you hate me,

and that our parting is dictated by a frigid heart! Alas! it must be so, for who would be found bold enough to check the ardour of a monarch's soul? "

The good King now found himself in a very perplexing situation, for he was ashamed to confess that he had been tutored by an old moralising minister, and sought every means of disguising from her the real truth. But her sighs and tears again appealed so powerfully to his feelings that he could not refrain from relating the whole history of his short-lived efforts to vanquish his love.

This confession removed a load from Adelaide's heart. With the joyful consciousness that her affairs were not quite in so hopeless a state as she had pictured them, she recovered all her usual animation and good-humour. This charming vivacity was as formidable as her tears.

" Stop a bit, you sulky old pedant," she cried, laughing through her tears, " and I will reward you well for the three days' anguish you inflicted upon me! With your royal permission, I will play off a trick upon the grudging old churl, which shall save him in future the trouble of preaching his prosy sermons in your Majesty's ear. No, he shall never indulge the least inclination to moralise any more. I have hit upon it already—a most excellent plan. If your Majesty will please to slip into the castle gardens about sunrise to-morrow, and conceal yourself near the pavilion, which his old notorious peacebreaker has converted into his summer residence, you shall see a sight which I think cannot fail to amuse you heartily. If my plan succeeds, you shall have the pleasure of seeing this most sage and philosophical greybeard play such pranks before high Heaven that you may easily repay him, with interest, all the fine speeches and reproaches which he has so philosophically bestowed upon you."

The King, much amused, seemed to approve of the idea, with the single condition that the joke should not be carried too far. Adelaide promised, and ran joyfully home.

Early the ensuing morning, while the Court lay buried in repose, the malicious lady, intent upon revenge, took her way towards the castle gardens with the speed of a young roe. She was attired in a charming morning dress, whose exquisite whiteness might have shamed the snow. Her raven hair floated loose upon the breeze, or wantoned over her swan-like neck, while her bosom itself was but lightly veiled from the eye of the young god of day.

Thus cruelly armed with the weapons of seductive destruction, the lovely nymph began to wander round the immaculate minister's abode. He was already seated at his official desk, and from time to time cast longing glances at the delicious gardens, which seemed to invite him down. To entice him to the window, Adelaide began to sing a song, sweet as the nightingale's:

I was a little lively thing—
To school each morn upon the wing:
  Yet loved I something better
Than sugar bread for alphabet,
And learnt no words that I was set
  Save that of Love—Love-letter.
And fain I would my wit apply,
If some loved one would love as I,
  And wear with me love's fetter.

The first notes of the decoy bird attracted the old courtier's attention. He laid his pen down, elevated his wig a little above his right ear, and listened.

"Who in all the world can be singing so prettily?" thought he, as he rose from his desk.

He crept softly to the window, peeped behind the curtain into the garden below, and was not a little surprised to observe the very young lady whom he had served so ill a turn only a few days before.

At first he turned once more to his desk; but his curiosity being piqued, he again rose, he peeped, he gazed; he admired, he longed, he lost himself. Love pinned him to the spot, or at least he was only able to turn one eye to his seat—the other was in the garden.

"You old fool!" at length he began, half laughing to himself; "I fear thou art bewitched with a girl young enough to be thy granddaughter. But zounds, she looks so desperately beautiful, old father Nestor himself might well fall in love with her. Zounds, I never envied my royal master so much in my life as I do now. How happy he must be! What wonder that in her society he should forget that he wears a crown, or that he has any subjects except herself in the kingdom!"

During this monologue the wicked Adelaide had contrived to fix her basilisk eyes upon him through the window, and played the part of a love-sick damsel to admiration. She plucked roses and forget-me-nots, which she made into a wreath—and sighed. Added to such artifices, she kept drawing nearer, and sang again:

Here, here I was captured
  By Love's mighty power,
And wander enraptured
  Till life's latest hour.
I would thou might'st feel, Love,
  What I suffer now;
I would I might steal, Love,
  To offer my vow.

The old courtier was enraptured too; and his head turned so giddy with the delicious song that he could no longer distinguish sense from nonsense, but took the compliment as he should do. He grew merry and wanton as a young colt, felt quite feverish, and his long-ossified old heart began to grow tender and melted away like

wax. More greedily than a fish takes the bait, his eye fastened on the lady's charms; and, like some fierce pike, he was caught with the hook sticking in his gullet.

He threw his morning gown aside, seized his best Court suit; yet recollecting, just as he began to decorate himself, that she might perhaps retire, he resumed his morning gown, and ran to the mirror to adjust his wig. Alas! he was shocked at his own figure; never had his cheeks looked so flat and fallen, nor so deeply ploughed by the hand of years. Indeed, they resembled shrivelled parchment so much that the voice of reason exclaimed:

"Thou art playing the fool, old greybeard! What! in the winter of thy days to think of making love to a blooming flower of spring! Down to thy desk again! where for years thou hast sat turning the rudder of the State, and heed not the song of any siren that attempts to bring the vessel of thy fame upon the rocks."

So argued reason, and would have said more; but the nightingale again trilled her tender song from the garden, and three times sweeter than before sang her third song:

Fonder than the fondest dove,
Once within a leafy grove,
Sat a maiden fresh and fair,
Watching for her one beloved:
Yet ere from that spot she moved,
Came woe and death to end her care.

This was too much for the sage statesman's prudence, and it turned his head. His passion escaped quite beyond the bounds of reason; he lost both rudder and compass, and ran like a horse broken loose down the steps into the garden, and never stopped until he dropped at Adelaide's feet. She had purposely averted her face, and started, as if suddenly taken by surprise, as her unwieldy lover plumped down before her.

"For Heaven's sake," she cried, at the same time taking the old courtier by the shoulders as if to raise him up, "what is the matter?"

"Nay, most lovely lady," he exclaimed, in the most tender accents, and gazing on her with melting looks, "suffer me to remain where I am, kneeling in the dust, until I obtain your full forgiveness, your smiles, your love."

"You surprise, you distress me greatly," replied the artful Adelaide, biting her lips to avoid bursting into a fit of laughter; "but rise, I entreat you to rise, for I must first learn whether you be jesting or in earnest."

"In earnest, upon my soul! Doubt not the truth and fervour of my passion! It would be an insult upon that divine—that exquisite—that angelic beauty which compels all men to adore you.

Even I, I who have ever boasted perfect freedom, must now submit myself a happy slave and prisoner, ready to wear your chains."

"Truly, I feel proud of such a conquest: yet I cannot consent to deprive you of your freedom—I dare not."

"But you must," replied the enraptured lover, "you cannot avoid it; for death only can rid me of your chains. This, too, he will shortly do if you should not quickly take compassion on me and consent that you will be mine."

"Such a formal declaration," replied Adelaide, "from your lips almost makes me imagine I am in a dream, a delightful dream. Leave me, pray, before I awake; for alas! I fear you are very far from being indifferent to me. Must I then confess it! I have long sighed for this hour; and besides, I have been haunted this some time past by the strangest emotion, the oddest wish you can imagine, the gratification of which depends wholly upon you."

"Name it, I entreat you; only name it, my adored Adelaide."

"Indeed, I feel some diffidence—I do, indeed, in mentioning it you will think it so very singular; yet I feel I cannot be happy unless you consent to indulge me in it. So I think I had better tell you."

"Oh, yes! give yourself no anxiety, not a moment's hesitation. Only state your wish, and have it: bid me mount the scaffold—the funeral pile—or the top of the town hall—and I will do it. I would march through fire and flood to reach you;—'sdeath, but I would."

"Would you really? Then I will mention it boldly; for I require no such terrible proofs of your affection. Freely and frankly, therefore, I have a most inexpressible desire, were it only for a few minutes, to take a short ride round these fine gravel walks."

"Whimsical girl! what can have put this into your head? However, there is nothing shall prevent it; you shall have a pad to carry you round the walks instantly."

"No, there is no occasion for that: it would most gratify me to be borne upon your own Right Honourable shoulders; it is that I long for; that must be the price of my affections; if you would only go down upon your hands and knees."

"Cruel, cruel girl! surely you are jesting. You mean to make a fool of me. Ask any other favour in the world; only spare my feelings; I know you would not wish to make me a laughing-post: consider my dignity—my official character—I am a minister."

"So, then," cried Adelaide, "you would permit these cold haughty maxims of yours to stand in the way of true passion and devotedness to the object of your love: how can it make you ridiculous when there is no one to see you? I vow eternal silence on the subject, as you may well believe; and the pretty birds and squirrels in the trees above us will surely tell no tales."

The poor lover stood in great perplexity some time, till, at length the violence of his passion mounting into the sublime quite

overpowered his sense of the ridiculous, and he bent down upon his hands and knees with all the grace and agility of an octogenarian, though he was little more than sixty. The lady then took a silk sash, and bitted him very dexterously; and next seizing the reins, she lightly sprang upon his back, almost convulsed with laughter, so that she had much difficulty in keeping her seat.

Scarcely, however, had he crawled at a snail-like pace a few yards, when suddenly the King sprang from his ambush among the shrubs and confronted his old minister upon his servile career.

"Ah, ah!" quoth he, "such scenes are worth my whole treasury in gold! To see such a philosopher and avowed enemy of the fair sex converted into an old hobby-horse. It is too much—too much," and he held his sides for laughter.

The old Privy Councillor gave a shriek of horror, just as if the sky had fallen, at this sight. Yet, after a long struggle, he tried to force a smile, and exclaimed, in a tone of mingled chagrin and good-humour:

"I know I am ridiculous enough, but I never before knew the enchanting power of love. I see now that if the little imp spares us in our youthful days, it is only to make a greater fool of us in old age. So jest and laugh, my Prince, to your heart's content; you must find some other Court preacher in future: I have done; I have surrendered without discretion to love—that 'mighty conqueror of hearts.'"

J. C. FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

1759–1805

THE SPORT OF DESTINY

Aloysius von G—— was the son of a commoner of some note in the —— Company's service, and the germs of his naturally happy genius were early unfolded by a liberal education. While yet young, but well grounded in the principles of knowledge, he entered into the military service under his native Prince, to whom he soon made himself known as a young man of great merit and still greater expectations. G—— was now in the full glow of youth, and the Prince about the same age. G—— was rash and enterprising; while the Prince, of a similar disposition, was fondly attached to such characters. Endued with a rich vein of wit, as well as information, which gave a zest to their intercourse, G—— became an agreeable addition to every circle in which he moved, from the evenness of his good-humour, and the charm and spirit which he infused into every subject. The Prince had, likewise, good sense enough to appreciate his virtues; virtues which he himself possessed in no ordinary degree. Indeed, all he attempted, even his recreations, bore a lofty character: difficulties deterred him not, and no disappointment could vanquish his spirit of perseverance. The value of this last quality was heightened by a very pleasing figure; an appearance of blooming health and Herculean power, animated by the eloquent play of a spirit which shone in his eye, in his carriage, and even in a natural dignity, relieved by a due share of modesty of manner. If the Prince was charmed with the spirit of his new associate, his seductive exterior appealed no less powerfully to his approbation and his taste. Similarity of age, of inclination, and of character shortly led to a degree of intimacy, which to all the warmth of friendship added all the fervour and sympathy of early youth. G—— stepped from one promotion to another, although these proofs of favour still appeared in the eyes of the Prince to leave him far behind what his deserts entitled him to. His good fortune rapidly advanced, for the author of it was his greatest admirer and his warmest friend. Not yet twenty-two years of age, he already saw himself placed upon an eminence formerly attained only by the most fortunate at the close of their

career. But his active spirit was incapable of reposing long in the lap of ease and idle vanity, or contenting itself with the glittering trappings of a large fortune, for the application of which, however, as well as its enjoyment, he by no means wanted either inclination or power. Often when the Prince was engaged in parties of pleasure, his young favourite would seek the calm oak or beechen shade, and devote himself with unwearied assiduity to affairs, in which he at length became so skilful and judicious, that no opportunity of employing him was omitted in which the talent of a single individual was required. From the mere companion of his pleasures, he soon became first counsellor and minister, and finally the director of his Prince. In a short time there was no way to obtain the royal favour but through him. He had the disposal of all rank and offices; all rewards and remunerations were received through his hands.

Still G—— was far too young and inexperienced, and had risen by too rapid strides, to enjoy his vast influence with moderation. The height on which he contemplated himself made his ambition giddy, and all modesty forsook him when he achieved the last honours which he had in view. The respectful humility and attentions shown him by the first nobles of the land, by all who, in birth, fortune, and reputation, among the oldest and most experienced of their age, so far surpassed him, excited the slumbering embers of pride and tyranny, while his unlimited power produced an evident hardness of character, which thenceforth, throughout all the variations of his fortune, remained. There was no service, however painful or great, which his friends might not venture to solicit; but woe be to his enemies! for, in proportion as his favours exceeded all due limits, his revenge was bitter and fatal. He was less solicitous to enrich himself than a number of his creatures, such as were most eager to do him fealty, and obey him as the author of their fortunes, while sheer whim, not justice, dictated his choice of them. Yet, by exacting too much, by the haughtiness of his commands and whole demeanour, he soon weaned from him the hearts even of those who were most bounden to him; while his rivals, and secret enviers of his power, were quickly converted into his deadliest enemies.

Among others who kept the most jealous eye upon all his motions, and with the quick, steady hand of fate were collecting the materials for his future accusation, and slowly undermining the pillars of his greatness, was a Piedmontese count, named Joseph Martinenzo, belonging to the Prince's suite. G—— himself had promoted him, as a poor, harmless, obedient creature, to his present post—that of supplying his own place in attending upon the pleasures of his princely master—which he began to find too irksome, and which he willingly exchanged for some more important occupation.

Viewing this man merely as the work of his own hands, which he might, at any period he best pleased, again consign to its original nothingness, he felt assured, from equal motives of fear and gratitude, of the fidelity of his creature. He thus fell into the same error as was committed by Richelieu, in entrusting Louis XIII to the care of the young Le Grand, as one of his playthings. Without Richelieu's ability, also, of repairing so great a mistake, he had, moreover, to deal with a far bitterer enemy than the French minister had to encounter. Instead of boasting of his good fortune, or allowing his patron to feel that he could venture to dispense with his further patronage, Martinenzo was only the more cautious to maintain the show of dependence, and to bind himself with affected humility in closer alliance with his benefactor. Meanwhile, he did not omit to avail himself of the advantage afforded him by his office, to ingratiate himself by every means in his power personally with the Prince; until, from being useful, he became indispensable to him. In a very short period he made himself master of the Prince's mind—he discovered all the avenues to his confidence and favour, in both which he then gradually usurped a place. All those arts which pride, and a natural elevation of character, had taught the minister to hold in contempt, were brought into play by the Italian, who was not in any way scrupulous in the attainment of his object, about the means employed, however vile and despicable. He was well aware that mankind never stand so much in need of a guide and companion as in the career of vice, and that nothing so much conduces to unreserved confidence as participation in common foibles. With this knowledge he proceeded to play upon the Prince, to excite passions which had hitherto lain dormant, and direct them, as his confidential adviser and accomplice, to the worst of purposes. By a train of the most seductive arts he plunged him into excesses which admitted of no participation and no witness; and thus finally became master of secrets which were to be entrusted to no third person. Upon the progressive degradation of the Prince's character, he now began to lay the foundation of his own fortunes; the secrets which rendered him so formidable soon obtained for him complete dominion over the Prince's feelings, before G—— even suspected that he had a rival.

It may appear strange that so important a change should escape the minister's sagacity; but he had, unluckily, too high an opinion of his own worth, to suspect that a man like Martinenzo would venture to start up as an opponent; while the latter was himself too cautious to commit the least error which might tend to rouse him from his proud security. The same overweening confidence which had caused the downfall of so many of his predecessors from the slippery summit of royal favour was fast preparing the minister's

ruin. The confidential terms upon which he saw his own creature Martinenzo with his master gave him no uneasiness; he was glad to resign a species of favour which he despised, and which had never offered itself to him as the goal of his ambition; it was only as it smoothed his path to power that he had ever valued the Prince's friendship, and having ascended the summit of his wishes, he inconsiderately threw down the ladder by which he had risen.

Martinenzo was not the man to play a subordinate part. At each step in the Prince's favour, his hopes, too, rose higher, and his ambition, in so friendly a soil, began to strike deeper and stronger roots. His artful game of humility towards his benefactor became daily more hateful to him, in proportion as the growth of his reputation excited haughtier feelings. The minister's deportment towards him, on the other hand, so far from becoming more delicate with his rapid rise in the Prince's favour, evidently aimed at humbling his growing pride, by wholesome admonitions reminding him of his dependence—a species of tyranny which finally grew so intolerable, that he eagerly laid a plot to end it at a single blow, and aimed boldly at the destruction of his rival. Under an impenetrable veil of dissimulation he brought his plan to full maturity. Still he did not venture to enter into open competition with his rival: although the first glow of the minister's favour was at an end, it had commenced too early, and spread too deep roots, to be torn rudely from the bosom of the Prince. The slightest circumstance might restore it to all its former vigour—a truth which convinced the Italian that the blow which he was about to strike must either fail or prove fatal. The ground which the minister had lost in the Prince's affections was perhaps compensated by the degree of respect and awe acquired in its place with which he held both his mind and counsels in control; a control arising out of his political skill and fidelity, not easly shaken off. Dear as he had once been to his master as a friend, he was now equally powerful as a minister.

By what means the Italian actually succeeded in his object remains a secret with the few who aided him in directing and in striking the blow. It was reported that he had detected a secret correspondence of a treacherous nature carried on by the minister with a neighbouring Court; but whether his proposals had been listened to or rejected remained matter of doubt. Whatever degree of truth there might be in the accusation, it fully answered the end proposed. The Prince viewed G—— in the light of one of the most ungrateful and treacherous of mankind, whose delinquencies were fully proved, and only awaited their due punishment. This was arranged secretly between the new favourite and his master; G—— was unconscious of the gathering storm, and continued wrapt

in this fatal security, until the last startling and terrific moment, which precipitated him from the summit of princely honours—the envy and the gaze of all eyes—into the lowest depths of obloquy and contempt.

On the appointed day G—— appeared as usual upon the parade, no longer an ensign, as he had commenced not many years before, but as an officer of distinguished rank. Even this was only meant as a modest veil for the exercise of his political power, which, in fact, placed him above the foremost of the land. The parade was his favourite place of indulging all the pride of patronage, of receiving the obsequious attentions of his creatures, and thus rewarding himself for the laborious exertions of the day. His chief dependents, all men of rank, were seen gathering round him, eager to offer their obeisance, yet evidently anxious as to the kind of reception they might meet with. The Prince himself, as he passed by, beheld his chief minister with a relenting eye; he felt how much more dangerous it would be to dispense with the services of such a man than with the friendship of his rival. Yet this was the spot, where he was flattered and almost adored like a god, which had just been cruelly selected for the revolting scene of his disgrace; but the Prince rejoined the Italian, and the affair was suffered to proceed. G—— mingled carelessly in the well-known circle, quite as unsuspicious of the bursting storm as their honoured patron, offering their distant and most flattering respects, and awaiting his commands. Shortly appeared Martinenzo, accompanied by some State officers, no longer the same meek, cringing, smiling courtling; the presumption and insolence of a lackey suddenly elevated into a master were visible in his quick, haughty step and his fiery eye. He marched straight up to the prime minister, and confronted him, with his hat on, for some moments, without uttering a word; then, in the Prince's name, he required his sword. This was handed to him with a look of silent, terrific emotion; and, thrusting the naked point into the ground, he split it into shivers with his foot; the fragments lay at G——'s feet. At this signal, the two adjutants likewise seized him; one strove to tear the order of the cross from his breast; the other pulled off the shoulder-knots, the facings of his uniform, and even the plume of feathers from his hat. During this cruel and unmanly proceeding, which passed almost in an instant, not a single voice was raised; a breathless silence reigned throughout the immense throng. Yet more than five hundred persons of rank were present; but all, with pale cheek and beating heart, stood motionless around him, the most painful expression of surprise visible in every quivering lip and every muscle of their face. At this trying juncture, while thus bereaving him of his honours, G—— presented a singular but no despicable picture to the eye; he laughed, but with difficulty could conquer his surprise:

it was a laugh, such as can only be heard at the gallows tree, in spite of nature and of death. Thousands in his place would have sunk powerless to the earth; his firmer nerves, his unflinching spirit, bore him through, and supported him, while he drained the cup of poison to the dregs.

When this procedure ended, he was conducted, through rows of numberless spectators, to the very extremity of the parade, where a covered carriage was in waiting for him. He was motioned to ascend; an escort of hussars being ready mounted to attend him. Meanwhile, the report of this transaction was spread on all sides: windows were opened, the streets were filled with throngs of curious people pursuing the carriage, and whose mingled cries of triumph, of scorn, or of indignation, at what had passed, were echoed far and wide—all connected with his name.

At length, however, he escaped the hideous din, though a no less fearful trial now awaited him. The carriage turned out of the high-road into a narrow, unfrequented by-way, towards the place of judgment whither, by command of the Prince, he was borne along at a slow pace. Here, after he had suffered all the torture of anticipated execution, tenfold embittered by its manner, the carriage turned off into a more public path. Exposed to the sultry summer heat, without hearing any accusation, without attendance or consolation, he passed seven heavy and afflicting hours before he arrived at his place of destination. Late in the evening the carriage stopped, when, deprived of all consciousness, his gigantic strength having at length yielded to twelve hours' fast and consuming thirst, G—— was dragged like a felon from his seat. On again returning to life, he found himself consigned to a subterranean dungeon, dimly lighted by the rising moon, which cast its sickly rays from a height of nineteen fathoms through a few grated openings, admitting also the cold air from above. Near him he found a portion of coarse bread, with a vessel of water, and a heap of straw for his couch. He endured this situation without any interruption until noon the ensuing day, when he heard a sash of one of the iron windows in the centre of the tower drawn aside; two hands were visible, lowering down a basket, like that which he found containing his food the day before. For the first time since the frightful revolution of his affairs, he felt some inclination to inquire into the cause, and into the nature of his future destiny. But he received no answer from above; the hands disappeared; and the sash was closed. Thus, without beholding the face or hearing the voice of a fellow-creature; without the least light thrown upon his destiny; left in utter ignorance as to both the future and the past; never feeling the warmth of the sun nor the freshness of the air; remote from human aid and human compassion; he numbered

in this frightful abode four hundred and ninety long and heavy days, sustained upon a small allowance of coarse bread. The last, too, was provided with that sorrowful monotony on the noon of each day, which, while it sustains life, only renders it more sensible of its utter wretchedness. Yet this was not enough. He one day made a discovery which filled up the measure of his calamity. He recognised the place; it was the same which, in his rage of vengeance against a worthy officer, who had had the misfortune to displease him, he himself ordered to be constructed only a few months before, and had even suggested the manner in which it might be rendered more revolting and terrific. He had likewise visited the place only shortly before, in order to witness its completion. What added the last bitter sting to his punishment was, that the same officer who had been destined to occupy it, an aged and meritorious colonel, had just succeeded the late commander of the fortress, and, by a sort of retributive justice, was made master of his enemy's destiny. He was deprived, as it were, of the last poor comfort, the right of compassionating himself. He knew he did not deserve it; he was to himself an object of disgust and the bitterest self-contempt—a feeling of all others the hardest to support by a haughty mind—to depend wholly upon the magnanimity of a foe to whom he had shown none.

His gaoler was, fortunately for him, a man of noble feelings, who scorned to take a mean revenge. He felt sorry at the idea of fulfilling the part assigned to him; yet, as a faithful subject and an old soldier, he did not think himself justified in departing from the usual rules; and he feared to swerve from his instructions. Still he pitied him, and pointed him out to a benevolent assistant, the preacher of the prison, who, having been able to ascertain nothing beyond mere report against the prisoner, resolved, as far as possible, to mitigate his sufferings. This excellent man, whose name I unwillingly suppress, believed he could in no way better fulfil his pious charge than by bestowing his spiritual support and consolations upon a being deprived of all other hopes of mercy.

As he could not obtain permission from the commandant himself to visit the prisoner, he cheerfully proceeded to the capital, in order to solicit personally the Prince's consent. He fell at his feet, appealing for some mitigation of the poor captive's sufferings: destitute of the aids of religion, never denied to the worst of felons; pining in solitude, and perhaps on the brink of madness or despair. With perfect confidence and sincerity, he then insisted, in the name of his pious calling, on free admittance to the prisoner, whom he claimed as a penitent, and for whose soul he was responsible. His subject made him eloquent; and he already began to make some impression upon the Prince, who at first had refused his request.

Nor did the pious man relinquish his efforts until he had extorted full permission to visit the wretched prisoner and administer to his spiritual wants.

The first human face G—— saw, after a lapse of sixteen months, was that of his new benefactor. He was eloquent in his gratitude, for he was the only friend he had in the world: in all his prosperity he had never boasted one. The good pastor's was like an angel's visit: it would be impossible to describe his feelings; but from this day forth his tears flowed more freely; he had found a being who sympathised with and compassionated him.

The pastor was filled with horror and astonishment on entering the frightful vault. His eyes sought a human form, and beheld, creeping towards him from one corner, a white and wild-looking living skeleton, his couch resembling rather the den of a beast of prey than a human resting-place. All vital signs seemed fled from his countenance; grief and despair had traced deep furrows there; his beard and nails were grown to a frightful length; his raiment had fallen from about him in tatters; and, for want of water and all means of cleanliness, the air was contaminated around. In this state he found the favourite of fortune; his iron frame had stood proof against the severity of his trial. Almost terrified at the sight, the pastor soon hastened back to the governor, in order to solicit a second alleviation of his sufferings, without which the first would prove of little avail.

This, however, being in opposition to the strict letter of the governor's instructions, the noble-minded being resolved on a second journey to the capital, in the hope of obtaining some further concessions from the Prince. He declared that he could not, without violating the sacred character of the Sacrament, administer it to a wretch who had been deprived of the exterior resemblance of a human being. In this object too, the good man succeeded; and, from that day forth, for the first time, the prisoner might be said to enjoy a new existence.

For many years, however, G—— was condemned to languish in captivity, though of a less revolting character than that he had previously suffered, more especially after the short summer of the new favourite's reign was passed, and others succeeded in his place, who either possessed more humanity, or had no motive for revenge. Yet ten years expired before the hour of his delivery approached, without any judicial investigation, or any formal acquittal. He was presented with his freedom as a sort of princely gift, being, at the same time, requested to banish himself for ever from his native country. But here the oral traditions, which I have been able to collect respecting his history, begin to fail; and I find myself compelled to omit an intervening period of about twenty years. During

the interval, he entered upon his military career afresh, in foreign service; which at last brought him, by combined industry and skill, to a pitch of greatness equal to that he had formerly attained in his native land. Time, likewise, finally a friend to the unfortunate, which ever makes slow but sure approaches to decrees of justice, took some retributive acts upon itself. The Prince's days of passion and of pleasure were over; humanity gradually resumed its sway over him; and, when his hair became blanched and he trembled over the brink of the grave, the friend of his early youth appeared to him, and constantly haunted his rest. In order to repair, as far as he yet could, the injuries which he had heaped upon him, the Prince, with friendly expressions, invited the banished man to revisit his native land, which, for some time past, he had eagerly longed to do. The meeting was extremely trying, though apparently warm and cordial, as if they had only separated a few days before. The Prince looked earnestly, as if trying to recall features so well known, and yet so strange to him; he appeared as if numbering the deep furrows which he had himself so cruelly traced there. But nowhere, in that aged, grief-worn countenance, could he recognise the features of his early companion and friend. The welcome and the look of mutual confidence were evidently forced on both sides; mutual shame and dread had virtually separated their hearts—to meet no more. A single look, which brought back to the Prince's soul the full sense of his guilty precipitancy and violence, hurt the Prince; while G—— felt that he could not longer entertain any regard for the author of his misfortunes.

Yet, in a short time, G—— was reinstated in all his ancient honours and authority, the Prince attempting to salve his conscience by vanquishing his dislike, and showering upon him the most splendid favours, as some remuneration for what had passed. Never, however, could he win back the sincere goodwill and attachment which had once distinguished his former favourite; the man's heart was closed to all the enjoyments of life. Could he restore to him the years of hope and happiness of which he had deprived him, or bestow the shadow of pleasure on old age, which only seemed to mock the real energies and delights of life, which he had formerly extinguished?

G—— continued in possession of this clear, unruffled evening of his days during nineteen years: neither fate nor time had quenched the fire of passion, nor wholly obscured the lively humour and spirit of his character. In his seventieth year he was still in pursuit of the shadow of a blessing which he really possessed when he was only twenty. He at length died, being then Governor of a fortress for the confinement of State prisoners. One would have naturally expected that he would have conducted himself with humanity, the

value of which he had so sensibly experienced, towards his unfortunate fellow-creatures. Nothing of the kind! he treated them with harshness and ill-temper; so much so, that in his eightieth year, a sudden fit of passion, into which he threw himself, against one of his prisoners, deprived him of his existence.

JEAN PAUL RICHTER
1763-1825

VAN DER KABEL'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

EVER since Haslan had been a duke's residence there was no record of anything having been looked forward to with such curiosity—excepting the birth of a hereditary prince—as the opening of Van der Kabel's last will and testament. Van der Kabel might have been called the Crœsus of Haslan, and his life a comedy of coins.

Seven distant relatives of seven deceased distant relatives of Kabel's indulged in some little hope of a place in the testament, the Crœsus having sworn to remember them there; but the hope was a faint one, as he seemed not greatly to be trusted, not only because he was in the habit of managing his affairs in a grimly moral and unselfish manner—in matters of morality the seven relatives were but beginners—but also because he handled things in so cynical a spirit and with a heart so full of traps and snares that there was no depending upon him. The continuous smile about his temples and thick lips, and his shrill sneering voice, impaired the good impression which his nobly-formed features and a pair of large hands, dropping New Year's gifts and benefits every day, might have made; therefore the swarms of birds declared this man, this living fruit-tree, which furnished them with food and nests, to be a secret snare, and would not see the visible berries for invisible nooses.

Between two strokes of paralysis he had dictated his testament, and entrusted it to the magistrate. When in a half-dying state he handed the receipt of deposit to the seven heirs-presumptive, he said, in his old tone, that he should greatly deplore it if this sign of his approaching decease would strike down sensible men, whom he liked to picture as laughing heirs rather than as weeping ones.

In due time the seven heirs put in an appearance at the Rathhaus with their receipt of deposit. There were the Right Reverend Glanz, the Police-inspector, the Court-agent Neupeter, the Court-attorney Knoll, the Police-inspector Harprecht, the Bookseller Pasvogel, the Preacher Flachs, and Flitte from Alsace. They urged the magistrate to produce the *charte* of the deceased Kabel, and open the will with all the formalities of the law. The high

executor of the same was the ruling burgomaster in person; the low executors were the town councillors. Without delay the *charte* and testament were fetched out of the private closet and deposited in the court-room, passed around to the senators and heirs, that they might gaze upon the printed town-seal. The directions written upon the outside of the *charte* were read in a loud voice by the town-scribent to the seven heirs, who were therewith informed that the deceased had in truth deposited the said *charte* with the magistrate, and entrusted it to the same *scrinio rei publicæ*, and that on the day when he had thus deposited it he had been in his right mind; last, the seven seals which he himself had placed thereon were examined and found intact. After the town-scribent had entered a registry of all these proceedings, the testament was opened in God's name, and read aloud by the ruling burgomaster as follows:

"I, Van der Kabel, herewith declare my last will and testament this 7th day of May 179—, here in my house in Haslan in the Hundgasse, without many millions of words, though I was once a German Notary Public and a Dutch dominé. But I believe I am still sufficiently conversant with the art of a notary to be enabled to act the part of a testator and bequeather in a proper and becoming manner.

"As for charitable legacies, so far as they are any concern of the lawyer's, I declare that the poor of this town, 3000 in number, shall receive as many light florins, for which they may celebrate the anniversary day of my death next year by pitching a camp upon the public common, make a merry day of it, and then take the tents to make clothes out of them. To all schoolmasters of our dukedom I bequeath a Louis d'or apiece; and to the Jews of the place I bequeath my pew in church. As I desire to have my testament subdivided into paragraphs, this may be considered as the first.

"*Paragraph* 2.—Declarations of inheritance and disinheritance are universally counted among the essentials of a testament. I therefore bequeath to the Right Reverend Glanz, the Court-attorney Knoll, the Court-agent Peter Neupeter, the Police-inspector Harprecht, the Preacher Flachs, the Bookseller Pasvogel, and Herr Flitte, nothing for the present, not so much because the most distant relatives can lay no claim to a *Trebellianica*, nor because most of them have enough to pass on to future generations as it is, but mainly because I know from their own assurance that they esteem my humble person more than my large fortune, of which I must therefore dispose otherwise."

Seven elongated faces here started up. Especially did the Right Reverend Glanz, a young man noted throughout Germany for his spoken and printed sermons, feel himself keenly injured by such

sneers. Flitte, from Alsace, permitted a whispered oath to escape his lips; and as for Flachs, the preacher, his chin grew longer and longer, and threatened to grow into a beard. Many a whispered ejaculation was overheard by the magistrate, addressing the late Herr Kabel by such appellatives as scoundrel, fool, antichrist. But the ruling burgomaster waved his hand, the court-attorney and the bookseller set all the elastic springs in their faces as in a trap once more, and the burgomaster continued reading, albeit with affected seriousness:

"*Paragraph* 3.—Excepting my present residence in the Hundgasse, which, according to this third paragraph, I will leave, with all that pertains thereto, to that one of the afore-mentioned seven gentlemen who, in one half-hour (counting from the reading of the paragraph), shall outdo his six rivals by being the first to shed a tear over me, his deceased relative, before an honourable magistrate, who shall register the fact. Should there be a drought at the end of that time, then the property must accrue to my heir-general, whom I shall forthwith name."

Here the burgomaster shut the will, remarking the conditions to be unusual, but not illegal, and in accordance therewith the court would now proceed to award the house to the first that wept; laid his watch which pointed to half-past eleven, upon the table, and sat down silently to note, together with the lawyers, in his office of chief executor, who would first shed the required tears.

That so long as this world has existed there has ever been a sadder and more ruffled assembly than this of seven dry provinces united as it were to weep, cannot fairly be assumed. At first precious moments were lost in dismay and smiling surprise; it was no easy matter to be transported so abruptly from cursing to weeping. Emotion pure and simple was not to be thought of, that was quite evident; but in twenty-six minutes something might be done by way of enforcing an April shower.

The merchant Neupeter asked if that was not a confounded affair and fool's comedy for a respectable man to be concerned in, and would have nothing to do with it; but at the same time the thought that a house might be washed into his purse on the bosom of a tear strangely moved his lachrymal glands.

The Court-attorney Knoll screwed up his face like a poor workman getting shaved and scratched by an apprentice on Saturday night by the light of a murky little lamp; he was greatly enraged at the misuse of testaments, and was not far removed from shedding tears of wrath.

The sly bookseller at once proceeded to apply himself assiduously to the matter in hand, and sent his memory on a stroll through all the sentimental subjects he was publishing or taking on commission; he looked much like a dog slowly licking off the emetic which the

Paris doctor, Demet, had spread on his nose; some time must necessarily elapse before it could take effect.

Flitte, from Alsace, danced about the Session-room, looked at all the mourners with laughing eyes, and swore, though he was not the richest among them, he could not for the whole of Strassburg and Alsace weep when there was such a joke abroad.

At last the Police-inspector Harprecht looked at him very significantly and remarked that if Monsieur hoped to extract the required drops from the well-known glands by means of laughter, and fraudulently profit thereby, he begged to remind him that he would gain as little as if he were to blow his nose, for it was well known that the *ductus nasalis* caused as many tears to take that direction as flow into a pew under the most affecting funeral sermon. But the Alsatian assured him that he was only laughing for fun without any serious intentions. The inspector on his part tried to bring something appropriate to the occasion into his eyes by opening them very wide and looking fixedly at one spot.

The preacher Flachs looked like a beggar on horseback, whose nag is running away with him; like the sun shining on a dismal day, his heart, which was piled about with the most suitable clouds of hardships at home and in church, might easily have drawn water on the spot, but unfortunately the house swimming in on the high tide proved too pleasant a sight, and repeatedly served as a dam.

The Right Reverend Glanz, who knew his nature from his experience in New Years' and funeral sermons, and who was quite certain that he would be able to work upon his own feelings if only he were granted an opportunity of addressing himself in touching language to others, now arose and said with dignity that he was sure every one who had read his printed works should feel convinced that he had a heart in his bosom, and that it was rather to be expected of him to suppress such sacred symbols as tears, so as to deprive no human brother, than to extract them by force. "This heart has overflowed ere now, but it was in secret, for Kabel was my friend," he said, and looked about him.

With satisfaction he saw that they were all sitting there as dry as so many sticks. As things stood now, crocodiles, stags, elephants, and witches could have wept more easily than the heirs, irritated and enraged by Glanz as they were. Only Flachs had a turn of good luck. He thought of Kabel's good deeds and of the shabby dresses and grey locks of his congregation at early service, then in haste he gave a thought to Lazarus and his dogs and to his own lengthy coffin, then to all the people who have been beheaded at one time or other, the "Sorrows of Werther," a battlefield; and last he gave a pitiful thought to himself, how young he was, and how he was working and slaving for a miserable paragraph

in a testament. Another good heave with his pump-handle and it would fetch him water and a house.

"Oh, Kabel, my Kabel," continued Glanz, almost weeping at the glad prospect of mournful tears, "when on some future day, beside thy precious bosom now covered with dust, my own lies mouldering——"

"I believe, gentleman," said Flacks, getting up sadly and overflowing with tears, "I am weeping." Thereupon he sat down again and allowed them to run cheerfully down his cheeks; he was high and dry now; he had successfully angled the house away from Glanz, who was very much put out by his efforts, because he had talked away his appetite all to no purpose. Flachs's emotion was duly registered, and the house in the Hundgasse was legally assigned to him. The burgomaster was gratified that the poor devil should have it. It was the first time in the dukedom of Haslan that the tears of a teacher and preacher, like those of the goddess Freya, had changed into gold. Glanz was profuse in his congratulations, and jocosely reminded Flachs that he himself had perhaps been instrumental in bringing about this happy consummation.

M. E. ENGEL

1764–1836

TOBY WILT

One of the chief ornaments of a little provincial town, his native place, flourished Mr. Toby Wilt. At no period had he evinced a desire to travel, and never, on any occasion, exceeded his prescribed limits round the adjacent hamlets.

In spite of this, however, he knew more of the world than many who had travelled a great deal farther, and some who had expended the best part of their fortune on a fashionable trip to Paris or Italy. He was possessed of a rich fund of little anecdotes of the most useful class, which he had obtained by observation, and retailed for his own and his friends' edification. And though these showed no great stretch of genius or invention, they possessed considerable practical merit, and were, for the most part, remarkable for coming before company, coupled together, always two and two.

Among his acquaintance was a careful young gentleman of the name of Till, a great admirer of Mr. Toby Wilt for his known prudence and stock of observations. On one occasion he ventured to express his high opinion of them, to which his old friend replied in his stuttering style, "Ha! hem?—what, do you indeed think me such a wiseacre, then?"

"Why, all the world says so, Mr. Wilt; and I should be glad to become your pupil."

"Would you so, young man? Nothing more easy. If you really wish to become a prudent youth, in fact, you have only to study the conduct and deportment of fools."

"In what manner do you mean?"

"What manner! by trying to act differently, to be sure."

"May I beg an anecdote, by way of illustration?"

"I believe I can accommodate you with one, Mr. Till. When I was a young man, there resided in this town a Mr. Veit, an old mathematician, rather a meagre and morose sort of personage. I used often to see him walking about, muttering to himself as he went alone, and never stopping to salute any of his neighbours and acquaintance; much less would he look them in the face and converse with them; being always too earnestly engaged in solving the problem of his own perfections. Now what do you suppose, Mr.

Till, that people were in the habit of saying of him? "

"Most probably that he was a very shrewd, wise old gentleman," said Mr. Till.

"No; you are somewhat on the wrong side; they called him an old fool. So, so! I used to think within myself—for this sort of title, however general, was not at all to my taste—I must take care how I imitate my old friend Mr. Veit. I see that will never do; one must not appear to be too full of oneself. Perhaps it is not well-bred, at all events, to go muttering with oneself; I see we must be more sociable, and talk a little to our neighbours. Let me hear your notion on the subject, Mr. Till; did I judge rightly? "

"Oh, indisputably; I think you were in the right."

"Nay, I am not so sure of that; not exactly so, as you will find. For we had another genius, a finical kind of personage, and a dancing-master, the very converse of the old postulating mathematician; and yet he did not please; though he used to stare in everybody's face as he skipped along. He was glad to talk to every one who would listen to him, as long as their patience lasted. Well, Mr. Till, and what do you suppose people used to say of *him*? "

"Most likely they would call him a wild, merry sort of fellow; somewhat of a bore withal."

"There you are not so very wide of the mark, Mr. Till; for they called him a fool. You see he won the same title by a very opposite kind of merit. Here's for us! I thought to myself; this is odd enough. What must one do? how in the world must one contrive to win the reputation of a wise man? It is plain one must take neither Mr. Veit nor Mr. Slight for our model. No, first of all, Mr. Till, you must look persons full in the face and salute them like the dancing-master, and then you must have your eyes upon yourself, and reflect seriously; talk with your neighbours, like Mr. Slight, and think of your own affairs afterwards, like Mr. Veit. That was my mode of arguing, Mr. Till. I compounded the gentleman, sir; people called me a prudent, long-headed fellow; and this is the whole of the mystery."

On another occasion, our prudent citizen received a visit from a young merchant of the name of Flau. He, too, came to consult; and, after making some wry faces, he began to lament the extent of his losses and misfortunes. "Well," replied old Wilt, giving him a tap on the shoulder, "and what does all this amount to?

"You must be on the alert, sir, and pursue fortune more diligently. She is a shy bird; and you must be on the look-out, like a sportsman."

"So I have been, sir, this long time past, but all to no purpose. One unlucky blow followed another, till I was fairly tripped up by the heels. For the future, I shall fold my arms, and rest quietly at home."

"In that you are wrong again, young gentleman; you must be on the look-out, I tell you; you need only to have a care how you carry your head."

"How I carry my head! What do you mean by that?"

"Only what I say; you must have a care how you carry your head, and the rest will follow of course. Let me explain how. When my left-hand neighbour was employed in building his new house, the whole street was paved with bricks and beams and rubbish, not very pleasant to pass over. Now one day, who should happen to be going that way but our worthy mayor, Mr. Trick, then a young fashionable alderman. He always carried his head high, and thus he came skipping along, with his arms dangling by his side, and his nose elevated towards the clouds; yet the next moment he found himself sprawling upon the ground; he had contrived to trip up his own heels, to break one of his legs, and obtain the advantage of limping to the end of his days, as you may often see. Do you take? do you comprehend me, Mr. Flau?"

"Perhaps you allude to the old proverb, 'Take heed not to carry your head too high.'"

"To be sure, but you must likewise contrive not to carry it too low; faults on both sides! If you have borne it too high, don't bear it now too low; you comprehend me? and you will do yet.

"Not long afterwards, Mr. Schale, the poet, was passing the same dangerous way, Mr. Flau. He was, perhaps, spouting verses, or brooding over his *res angusta domi*—I know not which; but he came jogging forwards with a woeful aspect, 'eyes bent on earth,' and a stooping, slouching gait, as if he would be glad to lower himself into the ground, sir. Well! he walked over one of the ropes; smack it went, and one of the great beams came tumbling about his ears from the scaffolding above. But he was too miserable a dog to be killed: he unluckily escaped; but was so terrified and nervous, poor devil, with the shock, that he fainted away, fell sick, and was confined to his garret for several weeks. Do you comprehend my meaning yet, Mr. Flau? How would you carry your head when you passed?"

"I! I would keep it in just equilibrium, to be sure."

"True; we must not cast our eye too ambitiously towards the clouds, nor fix it too demurely upon the ground. Whether we look above, around, or before us, Mr. Flau, let us do it in a calm, becoming sort of manner, and then we shall get on in the world, and no accidents will be likely to befall us. Let us preserve our equanimity: you comprehend me? Good-morning, Mr. Flau."

On a third occasion, a certain Mr. Wills waited upon his friend, Mr. Wilt, for the purpose of borrowing a sum of money to complete some little speculation he had in hand. "It is quite a prudent step; very sure," he said to old Mr. Wilt, "though I am sensible

it is not one of your lucrative speculations; but, as it happens to come very *apropos,* I should like to turn it to account, and make the most of it."

Old Wilt did not much relish this style of salutation, and seeing whither it would lead: "Pray, my dear Mr. Wills," inquired he, "how much money, do you think, will serve your turn?"

"It is nothing much of a sum, a mere trifle; a hundred dollars will suffice."

"So! if it be no more, I will directly comply with your request. Indeed, to show how much I have your interest at heart, I will also present you with something else, which, between ourselves, is worth more than a thousand dollars."

"Ah! pray explain yourself, my dear Mr. Wilt."

"Nay! it is only a short story; but it will serve our turn. In my younger days I had rather an eccentric kind of man for my neighbour, a Mr. Grell. He had continually a certain cant phrase at his tongue's end, which at last proved his ruin."

"You surprise me! I should like to know it."

"You shall. When any of his acquaintance used casually to accost him, observing, 'Well, Grell, how does business go on; how much did you clear by your last bargain?' 'Pshaw!' he would say, 'a mere trifle—some fifty dollars or so, but what of that?' Then again when he was asked: 'Well, Grell, how much are you minus by the last bankruptcy?' 'Pshaw!' he would answer, 'it is not worth speaking of; a mere trifle, some five per cent.' Now, though Grell was a lively fellow in his day, I can assure you, this foolish phrase of his brought him to ruin. He was at length compelled to decamp, sir, bag and baggage.

"What was the sum, Mr. Wills, which you stated?"

"I think I requested the loan of one hundred dollars."

"Exactly so; but my memory is growing treacherous. Well, Mr. Wills, but I had another neighbour, one Mr. Tomms, a corn-dealer. By means of another saying, did that man build the fine mansion you see yonder, with all its offices and warehouses to boot, sir. What say you?"

"I say it is very strange, indeed, Mr. Wilt: I have a great curiosity to hear this second phrase."

"You shall, Mr. Wills. Why, when his friends accosted him, 'Well, Mr. Tomms, how does business proceed? what cleared you by your last concern?' 'A good round sum, a hundred, that I did!' was his invariable answer, at the same time you might see that he was in high glee. When they perceived on the other hand that he was low, very low in spirits, they would inquire: 'What is the matter, Mr. Tomms? how much have you lost?' 'No joke indeed! a good round sum; some fifty dollars, I assure you.' Now this man began his career with a very small capital; but, as I told

you before, he has built that large house with all its offices, I say, and warehouses round it. Now, Mr. Wills, which of these phrases seems best suited to your taste? "

"Why, the last of them, Mr. Wilt, of course."

"Yet," replied old Wilt, "this Mr. Tomms does not quite suit me. He had the knack of saying a good round sum, to be sure, even when he was paying his poor-rates or his taxes. Then, I think, he ought to have employed, like a humane and loyal man, the saying of my other neighbour—'a mere trifle, nothing worth speaking of.' The truth is, Mr. Wills, that as they were both my near neighbours, I carefully preserved both their phrases, and apply them according to the circumstances of time and place; sometimes speaking like Mr. Grell, and at others like Mr. Tomms."

"Not so with me," cried Mr. Wills; "I admire Mr. Tomms' phrase; I do from my soul, sir."

"What was your demand—the sum you need, Mr. Wills? "

"A good round sum of money—one hundred dollars: no trifle, my dear Mr. Wilt! "

"There you talk like a man of sense—a very prudent man, Mr. Wills: you have really learned your moneyed catechism very well. Your answer was quite correct. Had you come to request really only a small trifle, I might perhaps have listened to you; but, as you observe it is a good round sum, allow me to pause. I wish you a good morning, Mr. Wills." But, having thus amused himself, old Mr. Wilt lent him the sum of money.

M. E. ENGEL

LADY ELIZABETH HILL

THERE was formerly a wealthy young widow, who formed the chief attraction of a small provincial town in Swabia, where she had lately taken up her residence, to the no slight perplexity of the inhabitants; for she puzzled them exceedingly in gaining a knowledge of her character. She was never what she appeared to be; she was constantly playing a double game, or suddenly assuming some new shape or some fresh pursuit.

During the period that a certain aulic councillor had resided at the same place, being a man of taste and letters, her ladyship was occupied from morning till night in reading novels and romances; but the moment he took himself off, she bestowed her whole admiration upon one of the medical faculty, a great frequenter of all kinds of routs, assemblies, and festivals; her books were all thrown aside, and she had not a moment to spare from dancing, visiting and dress.

Shortly afterwards came a pious dignitary of the Church, appointed to the post of superintendent by the reigning Prince himself; so that the town had never before been honoured by so very reverend a personage. In a day or two her young ladyship was observed modestly attired in a sober suit of mourning; no more music and dancing was heard in *her* house, and it became the blessed resort of all kinds of saintly characters.

The change was this time so very remarkable, that all the professional gentlemen in the place were struck with it; they were at a loss to account for so sudden a revolution, and canvassed the subject at some length. There was a great diversity of opinions: First, the school rector (a man of wit and very good parts, which he displayed in one of the literary journals) was positive that her ladyship had no character at all; that she was fit neither for a poet nor a novelist, and that she was as little adapted to the stage; in fact, from a literary point of view, she was good for nothing.

Secondly, the superintendent, with his spiritual friends, hazarded more speculations upon the subject: the theatre and the novels forming no part of their lucubrations, they doubted not but that Lady Elizabeth had, at one time, been carnally minded; devoted to the perusal of ungodly books, and to other pomps and vanities of

the world, she was thus betrayed into open acts of impiety, having been seen at public dances and festivals, the very gayest of the gay. At length she felt the grace of God, which she had been too wise to resist, and they doubted not her conversion was sincere.

But it was now the doctor's turn; and fixing his eyes upon the animal system of her ladyship, leaving the concerns of her soul quite out of the question, as he presumed, he said, to the office of neither critic nor divine, his opinion was, that Lady Elizabeth had, in the first place, hurt her constitution by hard reading and studying romances in the day; and secondly, by dissipation and revelling at night. He added that a course of bleeding and frequent use of mineral waters in the spring might be of great service to her.

These gentlemen had thus adopted their own peculiar systems, much in the same manner as if they had provided themselves with false glasses, which prevented them from seeing any object clearly, but reflected it only in one light and colour. Nor was this all; for the rest of the citizens, conscious of the weakness of their own organs, were accustomed to repose implicit confidence in those of their superiors. Each contented himself with embracing one or other of the previous opinions, as he happened to be more or less swayed by motives of private interest.

Thus, the bookbinder, who had cleared a good sum by equipping for her ladyship a library of religious work, quartos and folios, all in a superb dress, at once declared himself in favour of the clergy, and very sincerely congratulated the lady upon her conversion.

But the linen-draper, whose profits were formerly very considerable, finding his custom dwindled almost to nothing, declared for the doctor's more uncivil hypothesis, and magnified a slight fit of religious melancholy into downright insanity.

Next came the shoemaker; and he, having lost only about one half of his former earnings since her ladyship had ceased dancing, embraced the more moderate opinion of the rector, lamenting only that so excellent a lady as her ladyship should be so very changeable in her plans, and not so much as know her own mind.

There was only one man in the whole place, and that was the tailor, who, having never injured the natural strength of his optics by the use of glasses, and having had no dealings with her ladyship, as she was accustomed to wear Dutch linen, showed more sagacity than all the rest of the politicians put together.

He saw the matter in a clear light; and one Sunday evening, when these worthy citizens of the second class were assembled at a tavern, their usual place of resort after service, the bookbinder broke out into this pious exclamation:

"The grace of God is said to have wrought miracles upon good Lady Hill."

The tailor positively contradicted such an assertion, declaring

that there was no kind of grace at all concerned in the business. This brought as flat a denial again from the bookbinder; while the other retorted that she had plainly lost her senses, to which the shoemaker agreed, adding, that she did not so much as know her own mind.

" The lady," continued the tailor, " knows very well what she is doing; and if you had all of you the proper use of your eyes, you might perceive what she is aiming at, as well as she does, or as well as I do.

" When the late aulic councillor was here, who do you suppose was the most important personage in the place? Why, the aulic councillor to be sure.

" Now, upon his departure, when the doctor came to reside here, who then, pray, was the person before whose face one and all of us were accustomed to bow and take off our hats? Why, the doctor to be sure! And again, when our good Prince was pleased to appoint a superintendent to visit us, who then was the person who took the place of the doctor, and topped all that had come before him in dignity and grace? This is the superintendent himself; and only let us seriously reflect upon all these circumstances, and we shall presently find, my friends, a key to the whole of the mystery."

The others laughed at the tailor's joke, and they were all of opinion that the little fellow was much more shrewd and long-headed than they had credited him with being. Their open admiration gave him no little satisfaction, as he was always mightily pleased to find himself in the right.

" Gentlemen," he continued, striking the table with his fist, and in a more assured tone; " gentlemen! I say, that if the good superintendent should happen to die, and no one should be appointed in his place, I'll wager my life upon it we shall see her ladyship taking the side of the doctor again."

This, however, did not exactly come to pass, luckily for the superintendent; though a fresh revolution took place. The Prince, being a truly godly Prince, recalled the superintendent to his own Court, in order to make him his confessor. Instead of him, however, he quartered a regiment upon the town, the command of which was entrusted to a major, a fine bold-looking fellow of his cloth. cloth.

In the course of a month the major was invited to dine with Lady Hill, and her ladyship soon began to dine with other company at the major's. Now the major's own lady was much admired for her elegant appearance, especially when on horseback. Lady Hill, sensible of her own charms, took airings on horseback, joined the major's lady, and was dressed in a green habit richly decorated with gold lace.

" That lady has no character, assuredly," cried the rector, as she was riding past his school.

" Say, she is no longer under the influence of grace," said a clergyman, just then returning from visiting the sick.

" The lady now adopts a proper regimen, and takes exercise," cried the doctor, as he smoked his cigar. " No fear but she will at last recover her health."

Thus did each of these self-complacent gentlemen try to justify his particular system, in such a way that the very incidents which went to refute it were employed to confirm it. The tailor was more fortunate, and meeting Lady Hill upon the bleaching-green returning from her ride, he shook his head, and said, " Behold what Vanity can do! "

The reader may perhaps be inclined to laugh at the trivial character of my story, but it has at least the merit of being true; and if he be an attentive observer, he will not want occasions on which to apply some of the foregoing remarks.

J. FRIEDRICH KIND

1768-1843

THE BEGGAR'S MARRIAGE GIFT

Otto Von D——, after an absence of several years, two of which he had spent in the luxurious capital of France, was recalled to his native Germany by the unexpected death of his father. He found the family estate involved in difficulties, chiefly occasioned by extravagance and mismanagement, which would have appeared inextricable to a mind possessing less energy than his own; but by at once adopting a system of curtailment and method he soon succeeded in bringing matters into such a train as not only enabled him to discharge the accumulated arrears of interest, but also gradually to reduce the principal debt with which his property had been improvidently burdened.

It was not until his mind was relieved of this first care, and he could uninterruptedly form his plans for the future, that Otto thought of choosing a companion who might share with him the sweets of life, and assist him in combating its toils. He had left Adelaide, the youngest daughter of his neighbour Von Z——, an interesting girl of fourteen; on his return he found her blooming in all the charms of youthful innocence; and he was not slow in observing, as well in the hearty welcome of her parents as in the tell-tale blush of the maiden herself, that his addresses would not be unacceptable.

He therefore embraced an early opportunity to declare his sentiments; and, after the preliminaries usual on such occasions, the happy day was fixed, arrived, and was observed with all those ceremonies which the country people in some parts of Germany still religiously keep up, according to the good old custom of their forefathers.

First came the wedding guests, conducting the bride, modestly clad in white, with a veil covering her face, and who were met on the lawn by the peasantry, preceded by the village musicians. The married women brought their offering of a cradle and fine baby linen, spun by themselves; the lads presented a handsome plough and harness; the maidens a snow-white lamb; and the children

doves and flowers. Adelaide gave her hand to all in silence; Otto spoke few but impressive words, and, on concluding, invited the whole party, in the name of the bride's father, to a collation and dance on the green, for which preparations had already been made.

The lamps were now lighted up, and fiddle and pipe were sounding merrily under the sweet-scented linden-trees, when a foreign livery-servant, whose coat was rather the worse for wear, made his appearance on the dancing place. His singular tones and strange gesticulations soon collected around him a troop of laughing villagers; but it was not without considerable difficulty gathered from the broken German of the orator (whose hands and feet were equally eloquent with his tongue), that his master's carriage had been overturned in the neighbourhood, and that a wheel was broken to pieces, which he was anxious to have put to rights, in order that he might prosecute his journey.

"Who talks of mending wheels, or going farther to-day?" hiccuped the bride's father, whose satisfaction at his daughter's good fortune had displayed itself at table in copious libations.

"To-day," added he, patting his ample sides, "let all wheels go in shivers; no man shall pass this house to-day; you may tell your master so; but stay, you may as well take me to him."

So saying, and attended by a crowd of followers, he proceeded to the highway, where they soon perceived a small waxcloth-covered carriage lying upset on the road, one of its hinder-wheels being as effectually demolished as if an axe had been used in the operation. A tall thin figure, dressed in a plain blue frock-coat, having his right arm in a sling, a patch over his left eye, and whose woebegone looks imparted to his general appearance no distant resemblance to the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, stood near the vehicle, holding a jaded Rosinante by the bridle.

No sooner did he perceive the party approaching than, hastening towards them, he addressed their leader in French, with much politeness of manner and fluency of utterance. Unfortunately, however, old Z——'s Court language had lain too long rusty, and the state of his ideas was too muddled to enable him to brush it up at the moment, so that he was obliged to make the stranger understand, more by signs than words, that he must not think of continuing his journey that day at least, but must remain with them as a wedding guest.

The invitation was accepted with many thanks; and the stranger, having caused his Sancho to wipe the dust from his hat and boots, put his collar to rights, and opened his surtout, under which a sort of uniform modestly peeped out. Thus prepared, he set himself in motion, by the help of a stout crutch-stick; and it then further appeared that his left foot was also disabled, though there was something not ungraceful in its hobble. On reaching the linden-place

he requested to be introduced to the young couple, and after wishing the bridegroom joy, he kissed the bride's hand, with the air of an old beau, and whispered many flattering things to her in his own language.

When this matter was settled, all hastened again to dance and play. Otto soon removed his bride to another quarter; and it seemed quite natural that the stiff and wearied old man should choose his seat on a bench apart from persons who could no more understand him than he could understand them.

On supper being announced, the stranger accompanied the rest to the eating apartment, where he planted himself, with considerable adroitness, between two of the rosiest and plumpest lasses in the room, to the no small mortification of a young lieutenant, who had fixed on this place for himself. Hilarity and mirth now presided over the happy party: the good-humoured joke was bandied about, and the hearty laugh echoed round the room, when one of the servants entered with a packet, which a messenger had just delivered, with directions that it should be given into the bridegroom's own hands. The curiosity of all was excited, and Otto was induced by their solicitations to open the packet immediately; and, after removing almost innumerable covers, he at length produced a plain wooden drinking-cup, with a silver rim, on which was engraved, "*Present de noces du Gueux.*"

"Jaques!" cried Otto, kissing the cup with emotion. Adelaide cast an inquiring eye at her lover, and lifted up the cup to examine it more nearly; but she had scarcely raised it from the table when its unexpected weight occasioning her to replace it rather smartly, the bottom fell out, and discovered a rose-coloured case, containing a pair of bracelets, set in brilliants of the purest water and newest fashion: the words "*a la belle épouse de mon ami*" were embroidered on the satin.

The surprise and curiosity on all sides may be easily conceived. All the guests rose from their seats, except the stranger, who remained sitting with the most perfect indifference, and an expression of countenance that almost appeared to indicate contempt for what was going forward. Otto, whose growing dislike to the stranger was not lessened by this conduct, measured him with an eye of indignation, and allowed himself the more readily to be persuaded, by his bride and the other guests, to satisfy their inquiries.

"Yes!" he began, a fine glow suffusing his manly cheeks; "yes! I am not ashamed to own it: a beggar—Jaques is the worthy man's name—is my dearest friend; is, to express all to you in a few words, the preserver of my life and honour. However painful it may be to me, on an occasion like the present, to accuse myself of a youthful indiscretion, yet I shall not hesitate to do so,

as I cannot otherwise, perhaps, do justice to the noble-minded Jaques, whose marriage present shall ever be dear to my heart, and the most valued ornament of my Adelaide."

"Then let me wear it to-day," said the lovely girl, with tremulous voice; and the bracelets were quickly transferred from their rose-coloured covering to the white satin of her arms. Otto resumed, after a short pause:

"During my residence in Paris I was almost daily in the habit of passing along the Pont Neuf. At one end of the bridge, and generally about the same spot, there sat a beggar, who, although he seemed scarcely more than fifty, had frequented the place upwards of thirty years, and was commonly known by the name of 'old Jaques.' Not out of any feeling of compassion, but merely because his general appearance rather interested me, I threw a sou into his hat as often as I chanced to pass near him. This became at length so habitual to me that whenever I approached his station I put my hand involuntarily into my pocket.

"He always wished me every possible good—chatted with me, when I was at leisure, about the news of the day—even warned me now and then against the dangers of the town; in short, in the course of half a year we stood together on the footing of acquaintances, who, though of different rank, are yet mutually pleased with each other.

"My time in Paris was spent very agreeably, and I may flatter myself not altogether without advantage. I lived as decently as my means permitted, but never extravagantly, till, a short time before my departure, my evil stars brought me acquainted with some young men who were addicted to gambling, and who, by little and little, led me on to stake, first small, and then large sums at play. The consequence of this was as may be supposed: but it was not until I had lost all my own money, and had become deeply indebted to my *soi-disant* friends, that I began seriously to reflect on my situation.

"I immediately formed the resolution to pause ere it was too late, and quit the capital for ever, after discharging the debt which I had contracted. I therefore wrote to my father, requesting such a remittance as might be necessary for this purpose; but that letter, and several which I sent subsequently, remained unanswered. My bills meanwhile became due. I was forced to have recourse to the assistance of usurers, and ruin stared me in the face.

"Disheartened, gloomy, and silent, I now passed Jaques without noticing him; his fixed and earnest gaze became intolerable, and I avoided the place where he stood. At length I received the long-looked-for letters from home; but instead of the remittances with which I had hoped to silence the most clamorous of my creditors, they brought me the intelligence of my father's death, after a short

illness, and announced the impossibility of sending me more money than would barely suffice for my travelling expenses.

" Nursed in the lap of affluence, and unused to privation of any sort, it may easily be supposed that I was but little prepared for such news. The death of my good father filled me with sorrow. The involved situation of his affairs, which I now learned for the first time, deprived me of all hope for the future. The idea of having debts which I could not discharge, and the prospect of prison in a foreign land, threw me into despair. The longer I considered, the more did my situation appear utterly hopeless, till at length, in a state of mind bordering on frenzy, and with a determination which such a state only could inspire, I walked out after a sleepless night, and bent my course towards the river. I was already within a few paces of the Pont Neuf, when Jaques threw himself, with greater importunity than usual, in my way. I *would* not see him.

" ' One word, sir,' he said, in a tone of entreaty, and taking hold of the skirt of my coat. ' Leave me, old man,' said I, with forced composure; ' to-day I have given *all* away.' He guessed my meaning better than I intended he should.

" ' By all that's sacred, my dear young master,' said he solemnly, ' confide in me. What has happened? '

" ' What is that to thee? ' I replied; ' thou canst not help me.'

" Who knows? Only speak, sir! I cannot rest until I learn what has so changed you. Tell me the cause of your dejection.'

" ' Why, only a paltry thousand louis! ' said I, with a shrug.

" ' And *is* that all? Good! I will lend them to you.'

" ' You, Jaques! Good old man, you have been drinking too freely this morning.'

" ' Well, only take the trouble of coming to me to-night; and till then, I conjure you, do nothing rashly.'

" The earnestness of his manner, the firmness with which he spoke, and the reflection that I could at any time carry my intention into effect, brought my thoughts into another channel, and induced me to yield to his request. Jaques gave me his address, in a remote suburb, and I pledged my word of honour to meet him there the same evening.

" Urged by curiosity more than by hope, I appeared at the appointed time and place, and found Jaques in a small but extremely clean apartment, plain but neatly furnished; he now wore a decent coat, and came forward to meet me with a friendly look.

" ' Consider all that you see here as your own,' said he. ' I have neither child nor relation, and what I daily receive from the benevolent suffices for my own and my housekeeper's wants.'

" Little as I had calculated on the old man's assistance, yet this address appeared too ridiculous; and I was hesitating whether I

hould consider him a fool or a madman, when he at once put an nd to my doubts; for, requesting me to partake of the refreshments vhich he had provided, he raised a part of the floor, and brought rom underneath a heavy wooden vessel, which he placed with diffi- ulty on the table. On removing the lid, you may figure my stonishment when I saw that it was filled to the brim with gold ieces.

" ' Help yourself, sir,' said he, smiling; ' here are about twelve undred louis. It is all I have by me in ready cash, but I can soon rocure more. Do not mistake me,' continued my honest Jaques, I am no common beggar, driving the trade from love of idleness, nd cheating the needy of the charitable gifts of the compassionate. am of noble, though poor birth. Having lost my parents early, I ntered the army in my sixteenth year, served under the great Saxe, nd if worthy of such a leader, let this testify ' : a cross of St. Louis ay on the heap of gold.

" ' In my twentieth year a cannon shot carried away my right rm. I received my discharge, and was thrown on the world estitute and hopeless. Ignorant of any trade by which I could ain a livelihood, and rendered incapable of labour by the loss of ny arm, I abandoned myself to a profound melancholy, which hrew me into a long and severe illness. When I recovered, my disappointed prospects, and a sort of spite at the world, made me a eggar. My youth and infirmities gained me more compassion han I had expected; and I soon earned not only my daily subsis- ence, but became enabled to lay by a trifle daily, which by little nd little amounted to a considerable sum. Out of this I assisted uch of my companions in misery as had been less fortunate than nyself in this calling, and thereby acquired a sort of consideration mongst them, but no disinterested attachment. This vexed me. adopted a foundling as my own child, and began to live even nore sparingly than before, in order to make provision for him. had him carefully brought up and educated till his sixteenth year, vhen a councillor was pleased with the lad, and took him into his ervice. This very boy—O François, François, how many tears have I hed on thy account!—soon began to consider it beneath him to be n terms of intimacy with a beggar; and on the same day that you irst gave me an alms, he had the cruelty to pass as if he did not now me. He was ashamed of me—of *me*, who at that moment vas begging to make him independent. " He heeds me not," aid I, and his unnatural conduct drove all the blood to my heart. ' Thou all-powerful Being! give me then another son." Scarcely ad I uttered the prayer when you approached, and threw, with compassionate look, a gift into my hat.' "

Otto was moved even to tears, and was forced to make a pause.

' ' *You* will not be ashamed of me,' continued Jaques. ' You are

now unfortunate: make the old beggar happy by accepting his assistance.'

"You may easily imagine how I felt at this moment. The wonderful intervention of Providence to prevent the commission of a crime at which I shudder; the noble, I may say the heavenly look of the good old man; but, above all, my own dreadful situation, crowded into my thoughts, and I did not hesitate to avail myself of his generous offer. My intention of disclosing to him the cause of my embarrassments was needless, for he had already informed himself of every particular. I allowed him to count out one thousand louis, and then requested pen and ink, in order to give him an acknowledgment for the amount; but my benefactor would not hear a word of this. 'Take,' said he, 'as much as you require: and if you die,' added he, 'you can pay me yonder! I want but little here. *You* are sent to me as a son, whether you will or no; and you, at least, cannot deprive me of the secret satisfaction of being your father.'

"'Yes, father! preserver and father,' cried I, falling on his bosom. 'Nature gave me one, and when I lost him Heaven replaced him in you.' I did not leave Jaques' cottage till a late hour, when I returned home with a lightened heart, and refreshing sleep once more visited my eyelids. Early on the following day I paid off every creditor, had another *tête-à-tête* with Jaques, and prepared immediately to quit France. My first care, on arriving here, would most certainly have been to discharge this, which I could truly call a debt of honour; but as he had expressly required me at parting not to think of this till after the end of a year at soonest, to give him, as he said, a proof of confidence, I deferred doing so till very lately, when, on repaying him his loan, I had the satisfaction of acquainting him with my approaching union."

"And he shall be *my* father also," said Adelaide, pressing his hand; then rising, and filling the goblet with wine, "Let us drink to the health of my worthy fathers—John von Z—— and Jaques the beggar."

Every one present pledged the toast with enthusiasm, except the old stranger, who, still evincing the most cutting indifference, pushed his chair back, and hastily rose up, with a countenance on which was written, in pretty legible characters, "What a fuss about a beggar!"

"Sir, you abuse the rights of hospitality!" cried Otto angrily, and going up to the Frenchman with the determination of making him quit the apartment.

"Mon ami, ah, mon fils!" replied the old man, with the tenderest expression, and removing at the same time the bandage from his left eye, "now indeed I am satisfied that my choice has not been misplaced. You have not been ashamed to acknowledge the

old beggar; your lovely bride, too, has called me father. For this alone have I undertaken a long journey, and caused my carriage to be overturned at your gate." He was now in his turn overcome; all the guests crowded round him with praises and caresses, and the grateful Otto, kissing his Adelaide, called this the happiest day of his life.

"Only allow me to pass my few remaining years with you," added Jaques, as he drew from his bosom a packet with his left hand, it being now remarked by all that the right was skilfully formed in wax. "There, my son, are your papers back. I will never be a burden to you. I have twelve hundred livres yearly of rent, and all I request is a small apartment in your house, or wheresoever else an honest beggar may patiently await his end."

Otto tenderly embraced his adopted father, and the wooden cup was frequently replenished in the course of the evening.

AUGUST GOTTLOB EBERHARDT

1769–1845

THE BET

It happened that the Reverend Father in God, Henry, Bishop of Halberstadt, who flourished about the end of the sixteenth century, had once the pleasure of a visit from another Reverend Father of equal rank, which continued for several months. He was received in the most hospitable manner; and one summer evening, as both host and guest were chatting familiarly together, the large round well-filled wine-cups, all fine silver, standing before them, they seemed inclined to drink more than usual. For the cups, they said, were but small, and the wine that day was very good.

From the moment they sat down to dinner until now, nine in the evening, they had been chiefly entertained from the same large favourite wine vault, bequeathed years ago to the host by a celebrated bishop, whose diocese also lay near the Rhine.

Both now agreed in opinion that it behoved every spiritual prince who had a just regard for his honour to follow so laudable an example, and build his cellar on the scale of the deceased prelate; and they proceeded to discuss how best such an undertaking might be executed. While minutely inquiring into all the bearings of such a building, the wine kept pace with the subject; but as the two together produce a soporific effect, our good bishops had something to do to keep their eyes open.

They yawned, and sipped, and rubbed their eyes; but they had almost exhausted their topic, which they could not renew as easily as their bottle: the dialogue became still more dull, and was just on the point of coming to a standstill, when the host bishop's shepherd, Conrad, appeared, driving his master's flock, a well-washed, well-fed, and numerous flock of sheep, as usual, past the bishop's window.

Now the good bishop was himself in the habit of reviewing his flock every evening. As Conrad drew nearer to the spot, and he heard the bleating and the tinkling of the bells with which some of them were adorned, he could not resist his old practice of going to meet them, and he took his guest along with him into the court-yard. As he passed by, Conrad, the shepherd, respectfully doffed his cap to his master with his customary salute of "God save the Lord Bishop!"

" Good e'en to you, Conrad," was the reply; and then followed the old inquiry: " And where is the tame ram? Where is Harne? "

Conrad stuck his two fingers in his mouth and gave a whistle, so loud and shrill that the stranger bishop, not expecting such a cracking sound quite so near him, put both his hands to his ears as if to save their drums. After this whistle there came bounding along a large, handsome, clean-washed ram, who ran first to the shepherd, and next presented himself to the bishop. The latter stroked and offered him some pieces of bread, which he always put into his pocket for the purpose after dinner. Then, after saying a few more words to the shepherd, he concluded with the question: " Are you making preparation yet for your marriage? " Conrad only shrugged his shoulders, and drove along his flock in perfect silence.

" Is not that an extraordinarily fine sheep of mine? " said Bishop Henry to his guest, while the latter contented himself by returning a somewhat indifferent " Yes."

" Yes! " echoed the Bishop of Halberstadt! " Why, I would not take any price for that animal, he is so tame and handsome. I have to thank my shepherd Conrad for this: he is the honestest fellow alive; he is honour itself."

His reverend brother laughed aloud at this singular eulogy; and when the other inquired what excited his mirth, he replied, " My dear friend, honour is a rare article in these days. In the course of my travels and my residence in the courts of princes I have acquired some knowledge of mankind, and do not so easily mistake one thing for another; black for white! no, they cannot impose upon me."

The Bishop of Halberstadt granted that he might be right in the main; but for all that, he would swear that his shepherd Conrad did not impose upon him, that he was an honest man.

" Stop there," cried his guest; " for I promise you he is not a hair better than others, only perhaps he is more cunning. Really honest servants are rarer than white ravens, and they are still less frequently to be met with, my friend, in the service of spiritual establishments. All of them deceive their masters; some indeed are better than others, but all are rogues."

Bishop Henry opposed this heartless doctrine with all his might, for his extra glasses of wine had mounted into his head, and he lauded the honour and virtue of all his spiritual subjects; but more especially those of his shepherd, who had never told him an untruth, or been guilty of any wrong action during the whole time he had been in his service.

" What, never! " cried his guest in an ironical tone; " has he never lied, never circumvented, or cheated any one, much less you? "

" No," returned the bishop, with some warmth, " never. Conrad has never told me a lie, and never will."

" Never will," retorted his guest; " what, never! Now what will you bet me upon that? He'll lie, I warrant him! "

" Agreed; done! " cried the bishop, offering his hand. " It is a bet! "

They shook hands, and after some desultory conversation as to the value of the bet, it was agreed, for the wine was still in their heads, that the loser should forfeit a vat of wine to the winner, in which there should be one hundred and fifty fuders—German measure.

The space of three days was fixed upon, during which Conrad's honour was to be put to the test, and the Bishop of Halberstadt bound over his guest by note of hand, as well as by oath, not to give the least hint, either himself or by any third person, to the shepherd relating to the impending bet.

It was now late in the evening; and both these worthy prelates, having fared so well at dinner as well as after dinner, and feeling quite unable to renew the entertainment for that day, sighed for repose. So they took leave of each other for the night, each inwardly congratulating himself that by this lucky bet he had succeeded in securing a good stock of wine, out of which his reverend brother would in future be regaled without entrenching upon his own pocket; for both felt convinced that they must win.

Now in the train of the stranger bishop was a certain domestic of the name of Peter. He was a very complete rogue in his way, and had the art of making himself so agreeable to his master as to be esteemed a kind of humble companion and privy councillor in all little emergencies where the bishop was inclined to doubt his own spiritual judgment.

Just before his master retired to rest, it occurred to him that he would send for Peter. And so inveterate was his old habit of consultation now become, that, in spite of his bond, the moment Peter appeared he began to consult him, informing him of every circumstance that had passed, concluding with requesting his opinion as to how the wager might best be secured.

Peter, finding from his master's account the small estimation in which he held the servants of noble prelates, declaring that all were more or less rogues, had wit enough to see the dilemma in which he was placed. So he somewhat drily answered that he was sorry he was not capable of advising his master in an affair of such a particular kind as this.

The bishop, however, who had long known him better than he imagined, quickly perceived the ground of his reluctance to enter on the subject; and, feeling certain that the most greedy selfishness formed the chief ingredient in his servant's character, he plainly

told him that if he would assist in securing the impending wager he should receive a handsome remuneration, in addition to a new scarlet cap.

This was intelligible language to Peter, and he opened his mouth, though, consistently with his character, it was only to observe upon the very trifling reward proposed, considering the immense amount of the wager in question; for, after all, what was a poor scarlet cap? In fact, the bishop was obliged to assure him that he did not intend to confine his gratitude to so slight a recompense before Peter would consent to put a hand to the job. But having made his terms, he was determined to spare nothing to bring the shepherd Conrad's honour into jeopardy. "Though he were a very phœnix of honesty," added he, "still he will have a fall."

On the following morning he rose with the determination to begin his machinations; and in a few hours he had learnt that Conrad had a sweetheart, the pretty Liese, to whom he was much attached. She would hear nothing of marriage, however, until he had a house of his own; and he was poor, and it would be the height of folly, in such circumstances, to load himself with the cares of a family.

All this Peter communicated to his master before dinner, and added that he had already obtained an interview with the fair Liese, and hence laid a plan to undermine the poor shepherd's integrity by means of the girl he loved. For this purpose he came to request a certain sum, which the bishop gave him.

He counted out the new shining pieces into his hand, reminding him at the same time to omit nothing that could tend to promote the success of their job. So Peter returned to finish his dialogue with the shepherd's sweetheart Liese, which was renewed as follows:

Peter. I am glad to hear, Liese, that Conrad has long been an admirer of yours: he is a brave, honest-hearted man.

Liese. It is easy to say yes; but the ways and means are the main thing.

Peter. Oh, if he were really sincere, as no doubt he is, you need have no fear upon that head.

Liese. There you are mistaken, good man: we cannot live upon love, and money we have none.

Peter. Ah, does the shoe pinch there?

Liese. Too true! If Conrad had enough to buy a little house and a bit of land, it would alter the case. As it is, we must not think of marrying.

Peter. And why not? I will undertake to give you as much as you want, provided you will assist me in return.

With these words Peter took out his purse and displayed a handful of money, which he threw upon a little table, so as almost to cover it. The money shone very temptingly in the maiden's eyes,

and she longed to call it her own property. " Now," said the wily tempter, " the whole of this shall be yours when you agree to purchase for me the handsome ram belonging to Conrad's flock."

" Yes," said Liese, " but the ram does not belong to the shepherd."

" What signifies that? " continued Peter. " He will find some means of obtaining it for you, at least if he loves you; and you must take no denial."

" There you do him injustice," returned Liese. " I know he would lay down his life for me."

" Then put his affection to the proof only so far."

Liese, in addition to her wish to obtain the money, had now a curiosity to learn whether Conrad would make such a sacrifice to secure her affections. She promised the rogue that she would do everything in her power to engage Conrad to procure for him the handsome sheep, and Peter counted out the money, promising to bring more when he saw his purchase. Further to assure her, he said he would directly secure the little house and ground which she knew of before any other purchaser should appear.

In fact, he contrived to engage her so deeply in his web of villainy that she could not retract, and her only chance now lay in vanquishing Conrad's scruples about the removal of the sheep. In this his wily plan Peter had so far succeeded.

On the following day Liese decked herself out more elegantly than usual, and took her way towards the neighbourhood where Conrad was accustomed to pasture his sheep. As she approached the spot she pretended to be busily engaged in gathering herbs. Scarcely had Conrad got a sight of her than he ran to join her, and the tame sheep followed him. It was not long before he entered on the subject nearest his heart, inquiring earnestly when he might hope to call her his own.

But Liese answered him, far more coldly than usual, " I have heard enough of this, Conrad, a thousand times over; it is all nonsense, you know, until you can inform me that you have got a house and piece of ground where we may live together comfortably. Yes, you know my mind, and, until you can show me a house and field of our own, I shall never think of marrying."

Poor Conrad was turning sorrowfully away, quite cast down by this harsh treatment, such as he had never before received, when the artful maiden threw him an encouraging glance, adding, " A pretty specimen this of your love, Conrad, going off already in such a huff! "

" Good Lord," cried the shepherd, " how you torture one; first of all you find fault with me, and now you seem to doubt my love. I declare I would give my life for you, if that would be of any use. Only put me to the proof! "

" I do not want so much; but, as you desire it, I will just try whether your promises are worth anything."

The tame sheep at this moment thrust his head between the two lovers, and Liese gave him a piece of bread, which he began to eat.

" Then give me this pretty sheep here, Conrad. I am sure I can bring you a noble price for him."

The shepherd uttered an exclamation of surprise at the demand. At length he said, " Anything in the world, dear Liese, but not that. I never should be able to part with him, and if the bishop were to miss his tame ram as I drove home in the evening, and no longer stroked him with his own hand—no, I could never bear that. Take the best ten of my own from the flock; you are welcome to them, but leave the ram! "

" There, I said so," cried Liese, in an offended tone; " you men are all the same. Off with you, then, with all your sheep; for you will not show me the least favour, even when on the point of marriage; what might I expect afterwards? I see too well! So away! I will have nothing more to say to you."

With a frowning face she turned from him, though he entreated her with tears in his eyes not to exact so hard a proof of his affection. Sharp words—at least as harsh as lovers can use—now passed on both sides. The contest was long, but scarcely for a moment doubtful; for the maiden now acquainted Conrad that she had already agreed to dispose of the sheep, believing he would never refuse her; that further she had accepted payment, and given earnest money, for the little property they had both so long wished for. In fact, she said, the sheep was sold and must be delivered up, cost what it would, for she had given her word and disposed of the purchase money.

This account she accompanied with a flood of tears, vowing that it was all owing to her affection for him, and now she was to be held up to the world as a liar and a deceiver, and this she was resolved she would never outlive. The sole cause was her desire to secure the house and ground, where they might have spent many happy days; but now all her sweetest hopes were destroyed by this heartless obstinacy, which she would never bear.

" Were sheep never killed before? " she inquired of the wretched Conrad, as she concluded her lecture. " Are they never lost or stolen? Does the wolf never devour them now, as formerly? Speak! "

" I see it all," cried Conrad bitterly, quite vanquished by her reproaches and her tears, as he at the same time gave her his hand. " The sheep shall be delivered up to you before noon! " And in her turn Liese promised to become his wife at the month's end, and sealed this last contract with a kiss. The shepherd and his

betrothed then took leave of each other, and Conrad gazed after her as long as she was in view.

Conrad, being now left alone, became more serious; his joy at the prospect of his marriage was sadly dashed by the thought of the scene that awaited him when the good bishop should first miss his tame sheep. How could he meet his eye, how muster courage to impose upon so excellent a master? He had been so long in his service, and thus to steal and lie at last—to steal his tame sheep, too, in which he took so much pleasure; it quite confounded all his ideas; he hardly knew whether he was dreaming or awake.

He stood cogitating on the spot where Liese had just before been gathering herbs. First, thought he, I shall have to speak to the bishop, and I must take care I am not taken by surprise and betray myself. He stuck his crook in the ground, then hung his coat over it, and placed his cap upon the top, declaring that he must try to act the part.

So he began to hold a dialogue with the bishop's effigy, in the following words, in which the tame sheep at his side often came in for a part: "God save you, Lord Bishop!" he cried out to the effigy. "Good-evening, Conrad," he went on; "where is the tame sheep?" "The ram, my Lord Bishop! the tame ram has overrun me. I have sought him everywhere. I have whistled for him as loud as I could, but he has never returned."

Conrad then whistled, and the ram began to bound and play with the counterfeit bishop before which the shepherd was bowing to the ground. "Alas," sighed Conard, shaking his head, "this will never do! The poor fellow is too fond of bread to think of running away. The bishop will never believe it. No, no; I must hit upon something better. Well then—Ah, my Lord Bishop, such a misfortune, our handsome ram, poor Harne, is gone, stolen clean away!"

Just as he said these words, and bowed low before the bishop's image, poor Harne, as if in reply, gave him a pretty sharp push with his horns. "No, this is not the way either," exclaimed Conrad, as he turned angrily away from the hated spot; "it is not so easily done."

He next tried a variety of other means, all of which proved equally unsuccessful; and he shook his head, confessing that it was all of no use.

"Yet it must be done," he added; "it is to no purpose to think; at noon I am to deliver up poor Harne here, in order to save Liese's good name!"

Again he began to meditate, and after some time, in which he muttered deeply, searching for some loophole by which to make his escape, he suddenly cried with a more joyful and confident air:

"I have it, I have it now; it is the best, and honour wears longest in the end."

He threw his cloak over his shoulders, donned his cap, and drove his flock farther over the green. A little before noon, he went away, deeply sighing, with the favourite ram, in order to deliver him to Liese. Without troubling herself with any scruples, she in her turn gave him up to Peter, who had paid so high for him, and received the rest of the money, which she paid for the new house, while Peter hastened to his master. He acquainted him with his success, and the stranger bishop now chuckled in his sleeve at the idea of the approaching evening, when Conrad would appear as usual with his flock, and with a lie in his mouth, ready to impose upon his master. Peter seconded him in all his self-complacency and hopes of triumph over his host, omitting not, at the same time, to remind him respecting his promise of the new scarlet cap, and the other presents he was to receive in the morning. At the appointed hour the two bishops stationed themselves, as usual, in the court-yard of the castle. Conrad now appeared in view driving his flock from the field, and slowly approached the spot where the good prelates were waiting for him. The wily guest, with his servant Peter standing behind him, secretly congratulated himself upon the security of his wager, and both imagined they could trace in Conrad's features, as he approached, an expression of alarm, and the twinges of a conscience ill at rest.

Harne, the handsome ram, was nowhere to be seen, nor ran as usual to receive his allowance from the bishop, and feel the honour of his lordly hand. "Where is Harne?" inquired the bishop the moment that he missed him.

"I have sold him," returned Conrad, in an earnest and decided tone; "he is not here. Honour wears the longest, my good lord bishop. I always shaped my course by it, and I will not depart from it now."

Peter's countenance grew a wonderfully deal longer when he heard these words, and his master looked little better, both being woefully disappointed and cast down. But the Bishop Henry of Halberstadt cried in a loud tone, while his face darkened with the most ominous frowns, "Idiot as thou art! how dared you to think of selling the tame ram without first obtaining my permission? but I will——"

"Most noble master," interrupted Conrad, "hear me patiently before you condemn me, let me beseech you! It was the maiden Liese who seduced me, exactly as Eve did Adam, and some arch villain hath likewise seduced Liese, exactly like the base fiend did Eve. If he will consent, however, to give me back the ram, I will not expose his name."

At the same time Conrad fixed his eyes upon Peter, who, full of rage and vexation, drew somewhat back; for he now saw full well that he should be accused of having thrown his master's money

away for nothing, that he must go without his new scarlet cap, and all the other presents he had expected, while his tricks would be made manifest to the world.

" It was Liese," continued Conrad, " who engaged for the sale of Harne, or all this would never have happened " (at these words his master began to breathe, scenting which way the wind lay). " You know how long we have loved each other, only waiting to marry until we had got a little more beforehand. She has received so large a sum for the sheep as to enable her to buy house and land sufficient to maintain us both with industry and care. She engaged for all this, and when she had said, ' Yea, please your reverend honour, and I will marry you,' I could hardly get courage to say, ' No, you shall not,' for then I must have exposed her as an impostor to the world. With the priest's help and blessing she will soon be my wife; and I am sure your reverence is too good not to permit the happiness of two human beings on account of the sale of one sheep; and for a servant who has served you so long and faithfully. This is the whole truth of the matter, my lord bishop, and now deal with me as you will; what is done is done, and Harne is gone. But do not punish me harder than your own conscience will warrant; and do nothing to Liese, I beseech you. It was the base fiend blinded her, and all out of love for me, and I am in little better case myself."

These declarations appeared so hard of digestion to the bishop that he was just on the point of giving fresh rein to his anger, when his guest with a fierce look, turning towards Peter, said, " Thou jolterhead, then I have lost my bet after all, through thee! " and he stamped indignantly with his foot.

" What say you there? " inquired the bishop of his guest, as he heard this final confirmation of his suspicions. Upon this, the other could not avoid coming to an explanation of the whole affair, which afforded the Bishop of Halberstadt the greatest satisfaction. He the more easily forgave his shepherd, as by his excellent conduct he had secured him the wager, having had the honesty and the courage to tell the truth.

" Well, then, honour wears the longest! " cried both the bishops in a breath; and Conrad's master added, " As a due return for your honourable conduct I take upon myself the whole expense of your marriage with Liese, and divide the whole flock with you."

To this the stranger bishop added, " I shall not after this venture to be stingy. I freely give the shepherd back his ram; the money I gave he may retain—it will serve as a wedding dower for his wife and the christening of the first child."

The Bishop of Halberstadt was shortly afterwards presented by his reverend friend with the large vat of wine, which he had fairly won.

JOHANNES H. D. ZSCHOKKE

1771–1848

THE BROKEN CUP

That Napoule is only a very little place on the bay of Cannes is true; yet it is pretty well known through all Provence. It lies in the shade of lofty evergreen palms and darker orange trees; but that alone would not make it renowned. Still they say that there are grown the most luscious grapes, the sweetest roses, and the handsomest girls. I don't know but it is so; in the meantime I believe it most readily. Pity that Napoule is so small, and cannot produce more luscious grapes, fragrant roses, and handsome maidens; especially, as we might then have some of them transplanted to our own country.

As, ever since the foundation of Napoule, all the Napoulese women have been beauties, so the little Marietta was a wonder of wonders, as the chronicles of the place declare. She was called the little Marietta; yet she was not smaller than a girl of seventeen or thereabout ought to be, seeing that her forehead just reached up to the lips of a grown man.

The chronicles aforesaid had very good ground for speaking of Marietta. I, had I stood in the shoes of the chronicler, would have done the same. For Marietta, who until lately had lived with her mother Manon at Avignon, when she came back to her birthplace, quite upset the whole village. Verily, not the houses, but the people and their heads; and not the heads of all the people, but of those particularly whose heads and hearts are always in danger when in the neighbourhood of two bright eyes. I know very well that such a position is no joke.

Mother Manon would have done much better if she had remained at Avignon. But she had been left a small inheritance, by which she received at Napoule an estate consisting of some vine-hills, and a house that lay in the shadow of a rock, between certain olive trees and African acacias. This is a kind of thing which no unprovided widow ever rejects; and, accordingly, in her own estimation, she was as rich and happy as though she were the Countess of Provence or something like it.

So much the worse was it for the good people of Napoule. They

never suspected their misfortune, not having read in Homer how a single pretty woman had filled all Greece and Lesser Asia with discord and war.

. . . . . .

Marietta had scarcely been fourteen days in the house between the olive trees and the African acacias before every young man of Napoule knew that she lived there, and that there lived not in all Provence a more charming girl than the one in that house.

Went she through the village, sweeping lightly along like a dressed-up angel, her frock, with its pale-green bodice, and orange leaves and rosebuds upon the bosom of it, fluttering in the breeze, and flowers and ribbons waving about the straw bonnet, which shaded her beautiful features—yes, then the grave old men spake out, and the young ones were struck dumb. And everywhere, to the right and left, little windows and doors were opened with a "Good-morning," or a "Good-evening, Marietta," as it might be, while she nodded to the right and left with a pleasant smile.

If Marietta walked into church, all hearts (that is, of the young people) forgot Heaven; all eyes turned from the saints, and the worshipping finger wandered idly among the pearls of the rosary. This must certainly have provoked much sorrow, at least among the more devout.

The maidens of Napoule particularly became very pious about this time, for they, most of all, took the matter to heart. And they were not to be blamed for it; for since the advent of Marietta more than one prospective groom had become cold, and more than one worshipper of some beloved one quite inconstant. There were bickerings and reproaches on all sides, many tears, pertinent lectures, and even rejections. The talk was no longer of marriages, but of separations. They began to return their pledges of troth, rings, ribbons, etc. The old persons took part with their children; criminations and strife spread from house to house; it was most deplorable.

"Marietta is the cause of all," said the pious maidens first; then the mothers said it; next the fathers took it up; and finally all—even the young men. But Marietta, shielded by her modesty and innocence, like the petals of the rosebud in its dark-green calix, did not suspect the mischief of which she was the occasion, and continued courteous to everybody. This touched the young men, who said, "Why condemn the pure and harmless child—she is not guilty!" Then the fathers said the same thing; then the mothers took it up, and finally all—even the pious maidens. For, let who would talk with Marietta, she was sure to gain their esteem. So before half a year had passed, everybody had spoken to her, and everybody loved her. But she did not suspect that she was the

object of such general regard, as she had not before suspected that she was the object of dislike. Does the violet, hidden in the down-trodden grass, think how sweet it is?

Now every one wished to make amends for the injustice they had done Marietta. Sympathy deepened the tenderness of their attachment. Marietta found herself greeted everywhere in a more friendly way than ever; she was more cordially welcomed, more heartily invited to the rural sports and dances.

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All men, however, are not endowed with tender sympathy; some have hearts hardened like Pharaoh's. This arises, no doubt, from that natural depravity which has come upon men in consequence of the fall of Adam, or because, at their baptism, the devil is not brought sufficiently under subjection.

A remarkable example of this hardness of heart was given by one Colin, the richest farmer and proprietor in Napoule, whose vine-yards and olive gardens, whose lemon and orange trees could hardly be counted in a day. One thing particularly demonstrates the perverseness of his disposition; he was twenty-seven years old, and had never yet asked for what purpose girls had been created!

True, all the people, especially damsels of a certain age, willingly forgave him this sin, and looked upon him as one of the best young men under the sun. His fine figure, his fresh, unembarrassed manner, his look, his laugh, enabled him to gain the favourable opinion of the aforesaid people, who would have forgiven him, had there been occasion, any one of the deadly sins. But the decision of such judges is not always to be trusted.

While both old and young at Napoule had become reconciled to the innocent Marietta, and proffered their sympathies to her, Colin was the only one who had no pity upon the poor child. If Marietta was talked of he became as dumb as a fish. If he met her in the street he would turn red and white with anger, and cast sidelong glances at her of the most malicious kind.

If at evening the young people met upon the seashore near the old castle ruins for sprightly pastimes, or rural dances, or to sing catches, Colin was the merriest among them. But as soon as Marietta arrived the rascally fellow was silent, and all the gold in the world couldn't have made him sing. What a pity, when he had such a fine voice! Everybody listened to it so willingly, and its store of songs was endless.

All the maidens looked kindly upon Colin, and he was friendly with all of them. He had, as we have said, a roguish glance, which the lasses feared and loved; and it was so sweet they would like to have had it painted. But, as might naturally be expected, the offended Marietta did not look graciously upon him. And in

that she was perfectly right. Whether he smiled or not, it was all the same to her. As to his roguish glance, why, she would never hear it mentioned; and therein too she was perfectly right. When he told a tale (and he knew thousands) and everybody listened, she nudged her neighbour, or perhaps threw tufts of grass at Peter or Paul, and laughed and chattered, and did not listen to Colin at all. This behaviour quite provoked the proud fellow, so that he would break off in the middle of his story and stalk sullenly away.

Revenge is sweet. The daughter of Mother Manon well knew how to triumph. Yet Marietta was a right good child and quite too tender-hearted. If Colin was silent, it gave her pain. If he was downcast, she laughed no more. If he went away, she did not stay long behind, but hurried to her home, and wept tears of repentance, more beautiful than those of the Magdalen, although she had not sinned like the Magdalen.

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Father Jerome, the pastor of Napoule, was an old man of seventy, who possessed all the virtues of a saint, and only one failing, which was, that by reason of his advanced years he was hard of hearing. But, on that very account, his homilies were more acceptable to the children of his baptism and blessing. True, he preached only of two subjects, as if they comprehended the whole of religion. It was either "Little children, love one another," or it was "Mysterious are the ways of Providence." And truly there is so much Faith, Love and Hope in these that one might at a pinch be saved by them. The little children loved one another most obediently, and trusted in the ways of Providence. Only Colin, with his flinty heart, would know nothing of either: for even when he professed to be friendly, he entertained the deepest malice.

The Napoulese went to the annual market or fair of the city of Vence. It was truly a joyful time, and though they had but little gold to buy with, there were many goods to look at. Now Marietta and Mother Manon went to the fair with the rest, and Colin was also there. He bought a great many curiosities and trifles for his friends—but he would not spend a farthing for Marietta. And yet he was always at her elbow, though he did not speak to her, nor she to him. It was easy to see that he was brooding over some scheme of wickedness.

Mother Manon stood gazing before a shop, when she suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh! Marietta, see that beautiful cup! A queen would not be ashamed to raise it to her lips. Only see: the edge is of dazzling gold, and the flowers upon it could not bloom more beautifully in the garden, although they are only painted. And in the midst of

this Paradise! pray see, Marietta, how the apples are smiling on the trees. They are verily tempting. And Adam cannot withstand it, as the enchanting Eve offers him one for food! And do see how prettily the little frisking lamb skips around the old tiger, and the snow-white dove with her golden throat stands there before the vulture, as if she would caress him! "

Marietta could not satisfy herself with looking. " Had I such a cup, mother! " she said, " it is far too beautiful to drink out of: I would place my flowers in it and constantly peep into Paradise. We are at the fair in Vence, but when I look on the picture I feel as if I were in Paradise."

So spoke Marietta, and called her companions to the spot to share her admiration of the cup: but the young men soon joined the maidens, until at length almost half the inhabitants of Napoule were assembled before the wonderfully beautiful cup. But miraculously beautiful was it mainly from its inestimable, translucent porcelain, with gilded handles and glowing colours. They asked the merchant timidly, " Sir, what is the price of it? " And he answered, " Among friends, it is worth a hundred livres " Then they all became silent, and went away in despair. When the Napoulese were all gone from the front of the shop, Colin came there by stealth, threw the merchant a hundred livres upon the counter, had the cup put in a box well packed with cotton, and then carried it off. What evil plans he had in view no one would have surmised.

Near Napoule, on his way home, it being already dusk, he met old Jacques, the Justice's servant, returning from the fields. Jacques was a very good man, but excessively stupid.

" I will give thee money enough to get something to drink, Jacques," said Colin, " if thou wilt bear this box to Manon's house, and leave it there; and if any one should see thee, and inquire from whom the box came, say, ' A stranger gave it to me.' But never disclose my name, or I will always detest thee."

Jacques promised this, took the drink-money and the box, and went with it toward the little dwelling between the olive trees and the African acacias.

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Before he arrived there he encountered his master, Justice Hautmartin, who asked, " Jacques, what art thou carrying? "

" A box for Mother Manon. But, sir, I cannot say from whom it comes."

" Why not? "

" Because Colin would always detest me."

" It is well that thou canst keep a secret. But it is already late; give me the box, for I am going to-morrow to see Mother Manon; I will deliver it to her and not betray that it came from Colin. It

will save thee a walk, and furnish me a good excuse for calling on the old lady."

Jacques gave the box to his master, whom he was accustomed to obey implicitly in all things. The justice bore it into his chamber, and examined it by the light with some curiosity. On the lid was neatly written with red chalk: "For the lovely and dear Marietta." But Monsieur Hautmartin well knew that this was some of Colin's mischief, and that some knavish trick lurked under the whole. He therefore opened the box carefully for fear that a mouse or rat should be concealed within. When he beheld the wondrous cup, which he had seen at Vence, he was dreadfully shocked, for Monsieur Hautmartin was a skilful casuist, and knew that the inventions and devices of the human heart are evil from our youth upward. He saw at once that Colin designed this cup as a means of bringing misfortune upon Marietta: perhaps to give out, when it should be in her possession, that it was the present of some successful lover in the town, or the like, so that all decent people would thereafter keep aloof from Marietta. Therefore Monsieur Hautmartin resolved, in order to prevent any evil reports, to profess himself the giver. Moreover, he loved Marietta, and would gladly have seen her observe more strictly toward himself the sayings of the grey-headed priest Jerome, "Little children, love one another." In truth, Monsieur Hautmartin was a little child of fifty years old, and Marietta did not think the saying applied particularly to him. Mother Manon, on the contrary, thought that the Justice was a clever little child, he had gold and a high reputation from one end of Napoule to the other. And when the Justice spoke of marriage, and Marietta ran away in affright, Mother Manon remained sitting, and had no fear for the tall, staid gentleman. It must also be confessed there were no faults in his person. And although Colin might be the handsomest man in the village, yet the Justice far surpassed him in two things, namely, in the number of years, and in a very, very big nose. Yes, this nose, which always went before the Justice like a herald to proclaim his approach, was a real elephant among human noses.

With this proboscis, his good purpose, and the cup, the Justice went the following morning to the house between the olive trees and the African acacias.

"For the beautiful Marietta," said he, "I hold nothing too costly. Yesterday you admired the cup at Vence; to-day allow me, lovely Marietta, to lay it and my devoted heart at your feet."

Manon and Marietta were transported beyond measure when they beheld the cup. Manon's eyes glistened with delight, but Marietta turned and said, "I can take neither your heart nor your cup."

Then Mother Manon was angry, and cried out, "But I accept both heart and cup. Oh, thou little fool, how long wilt thou

despise thy good fortune! For whom dost thou tarry? Will a count of Provence make thee his bride, that thou scornest the Justice of Napoule? I know better how to look after my interests. Monsieur Hautmartin, I deem it an honour to call thee my son-in-law."

Then Marietta went out and wept bitterly, and hated the beautiful cup with all her heart.

But the Justice, drawing the palm of his flabby hand over his nose, spoke thus judiciously:

"Mother Manon, hurry nothing. The dove will at length, when it learns to know me better, give way. I am not impetuous. I have some skill among women, and before a quarter of a year passes by I will insinuate myself into Marietta's good graces."

"Thy nose is too large for that," whispered Marietta, who listened outside the door and laughed to herself. In fact, the quarter of a year passed by and Monsieur Hautmartin had not yet pierced the heart even with the tip of his nose.

During this quarter of a year Marietta had other affairs to attend to. The cup gave her much vexation and trouble, and something else besides.

For a fortnight nothing else was talked of in Napoule, and every one said it is a present from the Justice, and the marriage is already agreed upon. Marietta solemnly declared to all her companions that she would rather plunge to the bottom of the sea than marry the Justice, but the maidens continued to banter her all the more, saying, "Oh, how blissful it must be to repose in the shadow of his nose!" This was her first vexation.

Then Mother Manon had the cruelty to force Marietta to rinse out the cup every morning at the spring under the rock and to fill it with fresh flowers. She hoped by this to accustom Marietta to the cup and heart of the giver. But Marietta continued to hate both the gift and giver, and her work at the spring became an actual punishment. Second vexation.

Then when, in the morning, she came to the spring, twice every week she found on the rock, immediately over it, some most beautiful flowers, handsomely arranged, all ready for the decoration of the cup. And on the flower-stalks a strip of paper was always tied, on which was written, "Dear Marietta." Now no one need expect to impose upon little Marietta as if magicians and fairies were still in the world. Consequently she knew that both the flowers and papers must have come from Monsieur Hautmartin. Marietta, indeed, would not smell them because the living breath from out of the Justice's nose had perfumed them. Nevertheless she took the flowers, because they were finer than wild flowers, and tore the slip of paper into a thousand pieces, which she strewed upon the spot where the flowers usually lay. But this did not vex Justice

Hautmartin, whose love was unparalleled in its kind as his nose was in its kind. Third vexation.

At length it came out in conversation with Monsieur Hautmartin that he was not the giver of the beautiful flowers. Then who could it be? Marietta was utterly astounded at the unexpected discovery. Thenceforth she took the flowers from the rock more kindly; but, further, Marietta was—what maidens are not wont to be—very inquisitive. She conjectured first this and then that young man in Napoule. Yet her conjectures were in vain. She looked and listened far into the night; she rose earlier than usual. But she looked and listened in vain. And still twice a week in the morning the miraculous flowers lay upon the rock, and upon the strip of paper wound round them she always read the silent sigh, "Dear Marietta!" Such an incident would have made even the most indifferent inquisitive. But curiosity at length became a burning pain. Fourth vexation.

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Now Father Jerome, on Sunday, had again preached from the text: "Mysterious are the dispensations of Providence." And little Marietta thought, "If Providence would only dispense that I might at length find out who is the flower dispenser. Father Jerome was never wrong."

On a summer night, when it was far too warm to rest, Marietta awoke very early, and could not resume her sleep. Therefore she sprang joyously from her couch as the first streaks of dawn flashed against the window of her little chamber, over the waves of the sea and the Lerinian Isles, dressed herself, and went out to wash her forehead, breast, and arms in the cool spring. She took her hat with her, intending to take a walk by the seashore, as she knew of a retired place for bathing.

In order to reach this retired spot it was necessary to pass over the rocks behind the house, and thence down through the orange and palm trees. On this occasion Marietta could not pass through them; for under the youngest and most tender of the palms lay a tall young man in profound sleep—near him a nosegay of most splendid flowers. A white paper lay thereon, from which probably a sigh was again breathing. How could Marietta get by there?

She stood still, trembling with fright. She would go home again. Hardly had she retreated a couple of steps, ere she looked again at the sleeper, and remained motionless. Yet the distance prevented her from recognising his face. Now the mystery was to be solved, or never. She tripped lightly nearer to the palms; but he seemed to stir—then she ran again toward the cottage. His movements were but the fearful imaginings of Marietta. Now she returned again on her way toward the palms; but his sleep might

erhaps be only dissembled—swiftly she ran toward the cottage—
ut who would flee for a mere probability? She trod more boldly
he path toward the palms.

With these fluctuations of her timid and joyous spirit, between
right and curiosity, with these to-and-fro trippings between the
ouse and the palm trees, she at length nearly approached the
leeper; at the same time curiosity became more powerful than fear.

"What is he to me? My way leads me directly past him.
Whether he sleeps or wakes, I will go straight on." So thought
Manon's daughter. But she passed not by, but stood looking
irectly in the face of the flower-giver, in order to be certain who it
as. Besides, he slept as if it were the first time in a month. And
ho was it? Now, who else should it be but the arch, wicked Colin.

So it was *he* who had annoyed the gentle maiden, and given her
o much trouble with Monsieur Hautmartin, because he bore a
rudge against her; he had been the one who had teased her with
owers, in order to torture her curiosity. Wherefore? He hated
Marietta. He behaved himself always most shamefully toward the
oor child. He avoided her when he could; and when he could
ot, he grieved the good-natured little one. With all the other
naidens of Napoule he was more chatty, friendly, courteous, than
oward Marietta. Consider—he had never once asked her to dance,
nd yet she danced bewitchingly.

Now there he lay, surprised, taken in the act. Revenge swelled
n Marietta's bosom. What disgrace could she subject him to? She
ook the nosegay, unloosened it, strewed his present over the
leeper in scorn. But the paper, on which appeared again the
gh, "Dear Marietta!" she retained, and thrust quickly into her
osom. She wished to preserve this proof of his handwriting.
Marietta was sly. Now she would go away. But her revenge was
ot yet satisfied. She could not leave the place without returning
olin's ill-will. She took the violet-coloured silken ribbon from her
at, and threw it lightly around the sleeper's arm and around the
ree, and with three knots tied Colin fast. Now when he awoke,
ow astonished he would be! How his curiosity would torment him
o ascertain who had played him this trick! He could not possibly
now. So much the better; it served him right. She seemed to
egret her work when she had finished it. Her bosom throbbed im-
etuously. Indeed, I believe that a little tear filled her eye, as
e compassionately gazed upon the guilty one. Slowly she re-
eated to the orange grove by the rocks—she looked around often
—slowly ascended the rocks, looking down among the palm trees
s she ascended. Then she hastened to Mother Manon, who was
alling her.

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That very day Colin practised new mischief. What did he?

He wished to shame the poor Marietta publicly. Ah! she never thought that every one in Napoule knew her violet-coloured ribbon! Colin remembered it but too well. Proudly he bound it around his hat, and exhibited it to the gaze of all the world as a conquest. And male and female cried out, "He has received it from Marietta." And all the maidens said angrily, "The reprobate!" And all the young men who liked to see Marietta cried out, "The reprobate!"

"How! Mother Manon?" shrieked the Justice Hautmartin when he came to her house, and he shrieked so loudly that it re-echoed wonderfully through his nose. "How! Do you suffer this? my betrothed presents the young proprietor Colin with her hat-band! It is high time that we celebrate our nuptials. When that is over, then I shall have a right to speak."

"You have a right!" answered Mother Manon. "If things are so, the marriage must take place forthwith. When that is done, all will go right."

"But, Mother Manon, Marietta always refuses to give me her consent."

"Prepare the marriage feast."

"But she will not even look kindly at me; and when I seat myself at her side, the little savage jumps up and runs away."

"Justice, only prepare the marriage feast."

"But if Marietta resists——"

"We will take her by surprise. We will go to Father Jerome on Monday morning early, and he shall quietly celebrate the marriage. This we can easily accomplish with him. I am her mother, you the first judicial person in Napoule. He must obey. Marietta need know nothing about it. Early on Monday morning I will send her to Father Jerome all alone, with a message so that she will suspect nothing. Then the priest shall speak earnestly to her. Half an hour afterward we two will come. Then swiftly to the altar. And even if Marietta should then say No, what does it matter? The old priest can hear nothing. But till then, mum to Marietta and all Napoule."

So the secret remained with the two. Marietta dreamed not of the good luck which was in store for her. She thought only of Colin's wickedness, which had made her the common talk of the whole place. Oh! how she repented her heedlessness about the ribbon; and yet in her heart she forgave the reprobate his crime. Marietta was far too good. She told her mother, she told all her playmates: "Colin has found my lost band. I never gave it to him. He only wishes to vex me with it. You all know that Colin was always ill-disposed toward me, and always sought to mortify me!"

Ah! the poor child! she knew not what new abomination the malicious fellow was again contriving.

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Early in the morning Marietta went to the spring with the cup. There were no flowers yet on the rock. It was still much too early; for the sun had scarcely risen from the sea.

Footsteps were heard. Colin came in sight, the flowers in his hand. Marietta became very red. Colin stammered out: "Good-morning, Marietta," but the greeting came not from his heart.

"Why dost thou wear my ribbon so publicly, Colin?" said Marietta, and placed the cup upon the rock. "I did not give it thee."

"Thou didst not give it to me, dear Marietta?" asked he, and inward rage made him deadly pale.

Marietta was ashamed of the falsehood, drooped her eyelids, and said after a while: "Well, I did give it thee, yet thou shouldst not have worn it. Give it back."

Slowly he untied it; his anger was so great that he could not prevent the tears from filling his eyes, nor the sighs from escaping his breast. "Dear Marietta, leave thy ribbon with me," said he softly.

"No," answered she.

Then his suppressed passion changed into desperation. Sighing, he looked toward heaven, then sadly on Marietta, who, silent and abashed, stood by the spring with downcast eyes.

He wound the violet-coloured ribbon around the stalks of the flowers, and said, "There, take them all," and threw the flowers so spitefully against the magnificent cup upon the rock that it was thrown down and dashed to pieces. Maliciously he fled away.

Mother Manon, lurking behind the window, had seen and heard all. When the cup broke, hearing and sight left her. She was scarcely able to speak for very horror. And as she pushed with all her strength against the narrow window, to shout after the guilty one, it gave way, and with one crash fell to earth and was shattered in pieces.

So much ill-luck would have discomposed any other woman. But Manon soon recovered herself. "How lucky that I was a witness to this roguery!" exclaimed she; "he must to the Justice—he shall replace both cup and window-sash with his gold. It will give a rich dowry to Marietta." But when Marietta brought in the fragments of the shattered cup, when Manon saw the Paradise lost, the good man Adam without a head, and of Eve not a solitary limb remaining, the serpent unhurt, triumphing, the tiger safe, but the little lamb gone even to the very tail, as if the tiger had swallowed it, then Mother Manon screamed forth curses against Colin, and said:

"One can easily see that this *fall* came from the hand of the devil."

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She took the cup in one hand, Marietta in the other, and went, about nine o'clock, to where Monsieur Hautmartin was wont to sit in judgment. She there made a great outcry, and showed the broken cup and the Paradise lost. Marietta wept bitterly.

The Justice, when he saw the broken cup and his beautiful bride in tears, flew into so violent a rage toward Colin that his nose was as violet-coloured as Marietta's well-known hat-band. He immediately despatched his bailiffs to bring the criminal before him.

Colin came, overwhelmed with grief. Mother Manon now repeated her complaint with great eloquence before Justice, bailiffs and scribes. But Colin listened not. He stepped to Marietta and whispered to her: "Forgive me, dear Marietta, as I forgive thee. I broke thy cup unintentionally; but thou, thou hast broken my heart!"

"What whispering is that?" cried Justice Hautmartin, with magisterial authority. "Hearken to this accusation, and defend yourself."

"I have naught to defend. I broke the cup against my will," said Colin.

"That I verily believe," said Marietta, sobbing. "I am as guilty as he; for I offended him—then he threw the ribbon and flowers to me. He could not help it."

"Well!" cried Mother Manon. "Do you intend to defend him? Mr. Justice, pronounce his sentence. He has broken the cup, and he does not deny it."

"Since you cannot deny it, Mr. Colin," said the Justice, "you must pay three hundred livres for the cup, for it is worth that; and then for——"

"No," interrupted Colin, "it is not worth that. I bought it at Vence for Marietta for a hundred livres."

"You bought it, sir brazen face?" shrieked the Justice, and his whole face became like Marietta's hat-band. He could not and would not say more, for he dreaded a disagreeable investigation of the matter.

But Colin was vexed at the imputation, and said: "I sent this cup on the evening of the fair, by your own servant, to Marietta. There stands Jacques in the door. Speak, Jacques, did I not give thee the box to carry to Mother Manon?"

Monsieur Hautmartin wished to interrupt this conversation by speaking loudly. But the simple Jacques said: "Only recollect, Justice, you took away Colin's box from me, and carried what was in it to Mother Manon. The box lies there under the papers."

Then the bailiffs were ordered to remove the simpleton; and olin was also directed to retire, until he should be sent for again.

" Very well, Mr. Justice," interposed Colin, " but this business all be your last in Napoule. I know this, that you would in- atiate yourself with Mother Manon and Marietta by means of my roperty. When you want me, you will have to ride to Grasse to ie Governor's." With that, Colin departed.

Monsieur Hautmartin was quite puzzled with this affair, and in is confusion knew not what he was about. Manon shook her ead. The affair was dark and mysterious to her. " Who will ow pay me for the broken cup? " she asked.

" To me," said Marietta, with glowing, brightened countenance, to *me* it is already paid for."

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Colin rode that same day to the Governor at Grasse, and came ack early the next morning. But Justice Hautmartin only ughed at him, and removed all of Mother Manon's suspicions by wearing he would let his nose be cut off if Colin did not pay three undred livres for the broken cup. He also went with Mother anon to talk with Father Jerome about the marriage, and im- ressed upon him the necessity of earnestly setting before Marietta er duty as an obedient daughter in not opposing the will of her other. This the pious old man promised, although he under- ood not the half of what they shouted in his ear.

When Monday morning came Mother Manon said to her daugh- r: " Dress yourself handsomely, and carry this myrtle wreath Father Jerome; he wants it for a bride." Marietta dressed her- lf in her Sunday clothes, took the myrtle wreath unsuspiciously, nd carried it to Father Jerome.

On the way Colin met her, and greeted her joyfully, though midly; and when she told him where she was taking the wreath, olin said: " I am going the same way, for I am carrying the oney for the church's tenths to the priest." And as they went on e took her hand silently, and both trembled as if they designed me crime against each other.

" Hast thou forgiven me? " whispered Colin, anxiously. " Ah! arietta, what have I done to thee, that thou art so cruel toward e? "

She could only say: " Be quiet, Colin, you shall have the ribbon gain; and I will preserve the cup since it came from you! Did really come from you? "

" Ah! Marietta, canst thou doubt it? All I have I would gladly ive thee. Wilt thou, hereafter, be as kind to me as thou art to thers? "

She replied not. But as she entered the parsonage she looked

aside at him, and when she saw his fine eyes filled with tears, she whispered softly: "Dear Colin!" Then he bent down and kissed her hand. With this the door of a chamber opened and Father Jerome, with venerable aspect, stood before them. The young couple held fast to each other. I know not whether this was the effect of the handkissing, or the awe they felt for the sage.

Marietta handed him the myrtle wreath. He laid it upon her head and said: "Little children, love one another"; and then urged the good maiden, in the most touching and pathetic manner, to love Colin. For the old gentleman, from his hardness of hearing, had either mistaken the name of the bridegroom, or forgotten it, and thought Colin must be the bridegroom.

Then Marietta's heart softened under the exhortation, and with tears and sobs she exclaimed: "Ah! I have loved him for a long time, but he hates me."

"I hate thee, Marietta?" cried Colin. "My soul has lived only in thee since thou camest to Napoule. Oh! Marietta, how could I hope and believe that thou didst love me? Does not all Napoule worship thee?"

"Why, then, dost thou avoid me, Colin, and prefer all my companions before me?"

"Oh! Marietta, I feared and trembled with love and anxiety when I beheld thee; I had not the courage to approach thee; and when I was away from thee I was most miserable."

As they talked thus with each other the good father thought they were quarrelling; and he threw his arms around them, brought them together, and said imploringly: "Little children, love one another."

Then Marietta sank on Colin's breast, and Colin threw his arms around her, and both faces beamed with rapture. They forgot the priest, the whole world. Each was sunk into the other. Both had so completely lost their recollection that, unwittingly, they followed the delightful Father Jerome into the church and before the altar.

"Marietta!" sighed he.

"Colin!" sighed she.

In the church there were many devout worshippers; but they witnessed Colin's and Marietta's marriage with amazement. Many ran out before the close of the ceremony, to spread the news throughout Napoule: "Colin and Marietta are married."

When the solemnisation was over, Father Jerome rejoiced that he had succeeded so well, and that such little opposition had been made by the parties. He led them into the parsonage.

. . . . . .

Then Mother Manon arrived, breathless; she had waited at home a long time for the bridegroom. He had not arrived. At the last

stroke of the clock she grew anxious and went to Monsieur Hautmartin's. There a new surprise awaited her. She learned that the Governor, together with the officers of the Viguerie, had appeared and taken possession of the accounts, chests and papers of the Justice and at the same time arrested Monsieur Hautmartin.

" This, surely, is the work of that wicked Colin," thought she, and hurried to the parsonage in order to apologise to Father Jerome for delaying the marriage. The good grey-headed old man advanced toward her, proud of his work, and leading by the hand the newly-married pair.

Now Mother Manon lost her wits and her speech in good earnest when she learned what had happened. But Colin had more thoughts and power of speech than in his whole previous life. He told of his love and the broken cup, the falsehood of the Justice, and how he had unmasked this unjust magistrate in the Viguerie at Grasse. Then he besought Mother Manon's blessing, since all this had happened without any fault on the part of Marietta or himself.

Father Jerome, who for a long while could not make out what had happened, when he received a full explanation of the marriage through mistake, piously folded his hands and exclaimed, with uplifted eyes: " Wonderful are the dispensations of Providence! " Colin and Marietta kissed his hands; Mother Manon, through sheer veneration of heaven, gave the young couple her blessing, but remarked incidentally that her head seemed turned round.

Mother Manon herself was pleased with her son-in-law when she came to know the full extent of his property, and especially when she found that Monsieur Hautmartin and his nose had been arrested.

" But am I then really a wife? " asked Marietta; " and really Colin's wife? "

Mother Manon nodded her head, and Marietta hung upon Colin's arm. Thus they went to Colin's farm, to his dwelling-house, through the garden.

" Look at the flowers, Marietta," said Colin; " how carefully I cultivated them for your cup! "

Colin, who had not expected so pleasant an event, now prepared a wedding feast on the spur of the occasion. Two days was it continued. All Napoule was feasted. Who shall describe Colin's extravagance?

The broken cup is preserved in the family to the present day as a memorial and sacred relic.

JOHANNES H. D. ZSCHOKKE

HOW THE VICAR CAME ROUND

THE Frau Obersteuerrätin was " auntie " to the whole world; and indeed she deserved the name, for she was a motherly friend, counsellor and helper to all who came within her domain; she was the best and most charitable of women, judging mildly of the weaknesses of others so long as her own little weaknesses were respected. She overlooked the eccentricities of her clerical brother, which he committed in a state of absent-mindedness, and she did not raise any objections to Susie's marvellous *naïveté*, though often enough it caused her bitter dilemmas.

It was a warm May day on which the Vicar entered the room with his usual greeting: "Good-morning, Auntie—good-morning, Susie."

Auntie nodded pleasantly. Susie, who was sitting by her on the sofa, knitting a white stocking, arose, dropped a little familiar curtsey, and said: " *Votre servante*, Uncle."

" But, Heaven preserve us, what is the matter with you to-day, Vicar? " said Aunt Rosmarin.

" How so? " queried the Vicar, putting his hands in all of his pockets in a vain search for a handkerchief with which to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

" It's very likely you have your wig in your pocket," said Auntie, " for your handkerchief is on your head."

" On my head," exclaimed the Vicar in surprise, and putting his hand there he found it. " I shouldn't be greatly surprised if you were right, Auntie; it's a hot, hot day; the sun was burning, my back was burning; I came from town, so I took off my wig to cool my head, spread my handkerchief over the latter, and lay down in a corn-field."

Again he began to search his pockets, while Susie made room for him on the sofa, and went out to get him a refreshing drink of water and raspberry syrup.

" What are you looking for, Vicar? " asked Auntie.

" If I mistake not, I brought a letter for you from town; but what has become of it is more than I can tell. I think it is from the Burgomaster. Seek and ye shall find."

" But, Vicar, first of all, put on your wig—this is very indecent. t is an insult to your congregation to walk about bald-headed."

" I should hope not. But in that case I trust that there would e bears to obey me, like the prophet Elisha, and devour all bad oys who would make bold to have a laugh at me. But, *ad vocem,* ıy wig, Auntie; what did you do with it? "

" What did I do with it? You did not entrust it to my keeping. erhaps you lost it on the way! "

" Heaven preserve us! It was my best wig. You are right, ıuntie; it is lying in the grass, together with the Burgomaster's tter, precisely on the spot where I myself lay a quarter of an hour go, in the shadow of the corn."

Auntie seized her bell. The maid appeared; the Inspector was alled, and ordered to send for the wig and the letter—as quickly s possible. Auntie was quite as impatient to hide the Vicar's bald- ess as to read the Burgomaster's letter. The shape of the wig, as ell as colour and address of the letter, were explicitly described the Inspector, and he forthwith sent two grooms, four threshers, ıd one dairy-boy out upon all roads, footpaths, and byways that ın between Nieder-Fahren and Waiblingen. He stationed himself pon the hill by the wind-mill and reconnoitred the field of action ırough a telescope. Such excellent arrangements could not fail bring about the desired result. In half an hour the seven mes- engers returned to the house led by the wig, the letter, and the ıspector.

Sure enough the letter was from the Burgomaster. It contained othing less than a formal invitation to the Frau Obersteuerrätin, gether with her brother and Fräulein Susie and the Inspector iblein, to the wedding of the Burgomaster's eldest daughter.

Although Auntie felt very much flattered by this attention of the urgomaster, with whom she was but slightly acquainted, there ere some difficulties in the way which must needs be talked over a family council.

Auntie was very much averse to bringing Susie into contact in ıy way with the young gentlemen of Wailblingen. First of all, ısie was seventeen years old—a fact which did not seem at all ortentous to the child, but all the more so to her cautious aunt. cond, Susie was beautiful as any Susanna, not excepting the one the Old Testament. Thirdly, she had the prospect of inheriting considerable fortune, and Auntie had no notion of giving up her ırling to the first-comer. Fourthly, Susie was exceedingly inex- rienced, though she was not wanting in the usual measure of ıdable curiosity.

The young men of Waiblingen were in no way suited to be the mpanions of such a girl. First, because a great many of them ere handsome, which is a very bad thing; and secondly, they were

all great lovers of comedies and novels; they kept up an amateur stage; and at Waiblingen two booksellers made their living with circulating libraries—a bad sign of our times! Thirdly, even though one might have forgiven them their sleek faces and romantic tendencies, few of them had a fortune that would weigh in the scales against Aunt Rosmarin's possessions, nor were they of a rank to be compared with the title of Obersteuerrat.

Auntie had pondered this question long since in the silence of her own heart, and she had come to the conclusion that it was best to take defensive measures against the elegant world of Waiblingen. Susie seldom went there, and still seldomer were there any young guests invited to Nieder-Fahren.

After ripe consideration it was decided in the family council, in which the Inspector also took part, to go to the wedding at the Burgomaster's, but not without the utmost caution.

Auntie undertook to call Susie's attention to the dangers arising out of the affections. The Vicar was to add spiritual admonition, and the Inspector—who had the reputation of having been a good waltzer in his younger years, while now he was unfortunately a bachelor of fifty-six—promised to renew Susie's dancing-lessons. At the wedding all three pledged each other to do their best, and not lose the damsel out of sight.

Hereupon tailors, shoemakers and milliners were put in a fair way of getting a living. Auntie was desirous of doing whatever was due to her rank, and she also had the pardonable pride of showing off Susie's beauty to the best advantage.

Susie was delighted with the elaborate preparations—all this was a new experience. She put her dancing-master quite out of breath, and her only regret was that his feet being fifty-six years old were not as flexible as hers being seventeen. Joy and nature taught her to dance; but Säblein took it all upon his account. He was nothing loath to practise his noble half-forgotten art, the less so as the family council had decreed that he alone should be Susie's partner at the wedding.

Unfortunately this plan miscarried, and the reason was this. The day before the wedding all the dances were to be reviewed once more under the supervision of the Vicar and Auntie. Before the spectators came, Säblein exerted himself more than was good for him to dance at least no worse than his clever pupil. She floated about like a butterfly, and in her rapture took many a step which was no less graceful for not coming under any rule. Säblein, in an ecstasy of delight, rashly undertook to show her the acme of his art. Years ago he could dance *entrechats*—ambition pricked him to make a trial once more. His first attempt was half a failure, his second was a whole one. His lank, thin-whittled legs, which had never been a cause of reproach to him, got so hopelessly and

bnormally entangled that, the rest of his body keeping on motion, disaster was inevitable. The unfortunate dancing-master fell in most *un*masterly manner upon the floor, and as a falling pine proots all blooming bushes that surround it, so he pulled down ne little sylph that was frolicking about him.

The Vicar, just about to open the door from without, heard the all, which shook the very foundations of the house, and entered astily. It was partly this haste and partly the Vicar's near-sighted-ess, which he was wont to forget in his absent-mindedness, which ecame the cause of a second accident. He stepped upon the ancing-master's leg, which the latter drew back with pardonable bruptness, thereby robbing the Vicar of his equilibrium. Before e had time to beg pardon he lay upon the floor along with the thers. While his powdered wig was propelled by the rapid motion ır under the sofa, his short legs performed some wonderful antics, nd at last turned up their soles toward Heaven, as if imploring its aid.

The whole occurrence was a very short one. The Vicar was the rst to gather himself up, and, mistaking Susie's snowy, befrilled ap for his escaped wig, he seized it without more ado, and covered is head therewith because he heard the Obersteuerrätin at the oor. Susie was on her feet too before Auntie entered. But äblein sat upon the floor making horrible faces, for he had hurt is hip.

"Great heavens!" cried Aunt Rosmarin, clapping her hands gether, and looking now at the Inspector's painful grimaces, now t her brother's head in a woman's cap. "Are you playing a arce? Are you forgetful of all decency? Do you call this good reeding? and especially you, Vicar?" . . .

"And pray, why is it especially I?" he asked with a touch of nsitiveness, for he did not greatly like his sister's sermons.

Here Susie gained a hearing, and quickly restored peace by ving her perplexed aunt the explanation to this riddle, and ughingly exchanging her cap for the wig.

This apparently unimportant occurrence was the first cause to all llowing misfortunes; for Säblein went limping about for many ays, and consequently could not dance at the wedding.

. . . . . .

Aunt Rosmarin had her suspicions when she saw Susie, now vimming in bliss, now abject and mournful, or when she heard ow Susie went walking in the park evening after evening, and hen she herself, putting aside her dread of rheumatism, secretly llowed her there, but always found Susie alone.

Auntie shook her head, and said to her brother: "I believe icar, our little Baroness is in love." She had hit it, but wise untie never thought of the Baron. "We must keep our eyes on iis marvellously mysterious child, for she will confess nothing to

me. It is a delicate task, I know, and I myself am too old to run after her in the park every day the Lord makes. And, of course, Vicar, it is not a matter to be entrusted to the domestics; that were contrary to all dignity and order. But at the same time she must be watched, for these constant visits to the park for the last fortnight must have some good reason."

"Trust me, Auntie," said the Vicar, "trust me; I will guard the park like a spy. Murder shall out. This is just the sort of thing that suits me."

The plans were laid with great subtlety. The Vicar looked unconcerned in Susie's presence, and the following day at sunset he started upon his errand.

He was indeed very lucky, for the Baron was really in the park. He was twice lucky, for it so happened that he entered the park from the side where it touched the woods, and where the Baron was wont to enter it. He was in the habit of leaving his horse there, and giving it to the servant to hold.

The servant, finding his task decidedly dull, had to-day tied the Baron's horse to a young birch tree and gone about his own affairs, The Vicar looked at the elegantly-equipped noble steed from all sides, and nodding his head thoughtfully, unfastened it, saying to himself, "I'll take it home to our stable; the owner will no doubt apply for it, and all the rest will follow. In truth, it's a shrewd plan!"

But there was an unfavourable circumstance. There seemed to be a secret understanding between the horse and his master. He most decidedly objected to being pulled along by the bridle; no amount of patting and caressing had any effect; he planted his fore-legs firmly on the ground and pulled his head back.

"Friend," said the Vicar, "at best you are but a beast, and you have no eyes behind your ears. I'll wager you will go willingly." With that he climbed upon the noble animal's back, which stood as patient as a lamb. To be sure it was thirty years or more since the good Vicar had been on horseback, and, moreover, his legs were about two inches too short for the stirrups; but then it was to be but a few moments' ride, and it was well to show Aunt Rosmarin that he had not forgotten the chivalrous arts over his theology. Over and above all this there was danger in delay.

So he belaboured the horse's shanks with his boots, and the steed, taken aback by such ill-treatment, at once began to canter along the woody path, across the field into the open road, having for weeks past traversed no other way than this with the Baron. The Vicar, in danger of losing his balance, with laudable precaution clasped his fingers in the mane of his Pegasus. Finding himself upon the road, however, instead of parading under Auntie's window, he tried to grasp the bridle. Over this attempt he came very

ear losing both stirrups. Making sure of these once more, he let he bride alone. For a while these two purposes warred with each ther, and between times he admonished the fiery horse with many aresses to stand still. But it was all in vain; and when in his espair he pulled the rein too tight, at the same time clasping the orse's sides firmly with his legs, it forthwith rose upon its hind eet, and, to his inexpressible horror, began to walk about like a uman being, and perform tricks which were positively not to the icar's taste just at that moment.

He now succumbed to fate and to his horse, clinging to the tter with hands and feet while it sped along at a full gallop till ne poor Vicar was deaf and blind with dizziness.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee," he sighed. "If is isn't the very devil himself! Had I but left the beast standing here it was how happy should I be!"

It so happened that right here the road had been barred by easants in honour of the grazing cattle.

"Te Deum laudamus!" cried the Vicar. "Here surely this ascal of a horse will come to a stand." But the steed leaped over s if he had wings, so that the horseman's hair stood on end, and is hat and wig took flight in horror. "I have learned to ride better an you, for I still hold my seat," said the good Vicar in Christian anquillity to the truants, not venturing to turn and look after nem.

"Whither, in the Lord's name? Twice four-and-twenty hours t this rate and we shall have spanned this terrestrial globe and ome out on the other side of Nieder-Fahren." As he was saying is they approached a bridge. The Vicar, in terror lest the horse its blind rage might miss the bridge and leap into the stream, gged frantically at the rein on the side nearest to the bridge. ut he tugged too long; the provoking animal thereupon left the idge lying at the right, and jumped into the water. The Vicar me very near fainting away when he became aware of floating etween heaven and water, and felt the waves penetrate his black lk stockings, and soon after his velvet breeches, until they played out his hips.

The horse, which was a capital swimmer, reached the opposite ore in safety, regained the road, and jauntily continued its urney until it reached Schloss Malzen, where it darted joyfully ith the Vicar into the open door of the stable, standing still at last its own familiar stall. The servants in the courtyard ran in after m, helped the rider out of the saddle, and anxiously inquired ow he had come into possession of the Baron's horse.

An unspeakable sense of blissful security seized the much-tried ergyman as once more he felt *terra firma* beneath his feet. De-ived of his hat and his wig, to be sure, and the lower half of his

body dripping with water, far from home, the approaching night before him, and upon the domain of the arch-enemy of Nieder-Fahren—all these circumstances served to make the situation not altogether agreeable. But what cared he so long as his life was saved?

While the servants were storming the breathless gentleman with questions the Baron's steward appeared upon the scene, and hospitably urged him to come into the house. As upon his request a carriage was promised him to take him back to Nieder-Fahren, he consented to enter and rest before his departure. Meanwhile nearly two hours passed; no carriage appeared, and the Vicar began to wax suspicious lest he was being treated as a prisoner for having run away with the horse, although he had repeatedly affirmed that it was he who had been run away with. He finally decided to take flight. He arose, and was about to open the door, when Baron Pompeius von Malzen entered, having arrived upon his lackey's horse while the despairing lackey was on a search for the Baron's steed through the whole of Ober and Nieder-Fahren. The Baron, recognising the worthy uncle of his wife—the tale concerning the arrival of the horse with a wigless and decidedly damp clergyman had been related to him in the courtyard—at once escorted him to a better room, ordered dry clothing, and gave the Vicar time to change his garments. His departure was quite out of the question for that night; the Baron would not let the opportunity escape him to heap coals of fire upon the head of one of his adversaries, to entertain him sumptuously, and overwhelm him with courtesies.

Susie's uncle, surprised at the Baron's cordial manner, soon felt very comfortable behind smoking viands and bottles of Burgundy. Still, however soft and firm he sat upon the luxurious cushions of his chair, he could not for the whole evening rid himself of the notion, as he said, of having " the devilish beast " between his legs.

" At the same time I am more grateful to my good horse than I can tell you," said the Baron, " for bringing me the uncle of my beloved wife. I have long wished for the honour of your acquaintance, so that I might beg for your kind intercession. I adore my wife, and a separation is about to be forced upon us. My wife has forgiven me—nay, more, she loves me; she does not desire a separation, and yet——"

" Loves you? Does not desire a separation? " cried the Vicar, shaking his head, which was adorned with the Baron's best cotton nightcap.

" Will you have proofs? " said the Baron. " Ah, I will be frank with our dear uncle. You shall know all. This hour may decide our life's happiness." He thereupon went and fetched Susie's letters.

And indeed from his niece's letters the Vicar saw that between

her and the Baron there was eternal peace, and a great deal more that is eternal. He seemed greatly touched as he laid the letters down; he stretched out his hand across the table and said:

"Baron, I for my part will make peace with you. Susie shall be yours, and the law-suit may go to the dogs. But we must handle Aunt Rosmarin carefully. She is a dear, good woman, but she has peculiar ideas about some things. Up to this day I was a raging Saul, henceforth I shall be a gentle Paul, and shall begin at once upon my work of conversion. The Baron jumped up, embracing and kissing brave Saul in a rapture of delight.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile Aunt Rosmarin had heard her brother relate the story of his adventure. When he told her how he found the horse, her eyes sparkled with pleasure at the discovery. The fact of his getting into the saddle she accompanied with the remark: "You don't know how to ride. Every cobbler to his last!" When he came to his aerial flight across the bar, and his swim through the stream, she jumped up, nervously seized her brother's two hands and cried, "For heaven's sake, what dangers were you subject to?" And she did not regain her composure until he halted before the horse's crib. Then, as the Baron came in, her face lengthened; the warmer the Vicar grew in chanting his praises the cooler was Aunt Rosmarin. And when he had the audacity to add, "Susie does not seem to dislike the Baron; seems to me we had better let the law-suit go, and let things take their course," Auntie shook her head, while she gazed at her brother from top to toe with wide-open eyes.

"Well, I never!" said she. "I fear me the ride and the fright have done you some injury. If the Baron did not turn you out into the pitch-dark night, giving you lodging and food instead, he did no more than heathens and barbarians would have done. You need not think I'll give him Susie for his roasts and his Burgundy. A weak sort of man you must be to be willing to sacrifice your principles and all the disgrace and sorrow our family has suffered through the Baron for one poor supper."

Then did the Vicar arise in indignation and say, "Why, Aunt Rosmarin, has all Christian charity gone out of you? I wish then that *you* had ridden the Baron's horse in my stead; I wish *you* had been called upon to fly through the air, and to swim through the surging billows, to make the acquaintance of an honourable man. Then you would think different."

Aunt Rosmarin thought her brother's remarkable wish very improper, as well as insulting. She thereupon gave him a lecture lasting three hours, and having for its perpetual refrain, "I will not hear another word about the Baron. In future I shall act alone, in strict accordance with my principles."

CASPAR FRIEDRICH GOTTSCHALCK

circa 1772

THE UNLUCKY MISER

DURING the Thirty Years' War the neighbouring dwellers of the mountain hastily removed their money and other property into the castle of Questenberg, the better to secure it from military violence and depredations. The whole of these treasures are still said to lie concealed in a large brewing copper buried in one of the subterranean vaults, and cautiously guarded by a spectre of the castle.

Now it so happened that one Sunday an inhabitant of the place directed his steps towards the old castle, contemplated, as a rustic does, the overhanging ruins, explored all the places round, until at length he came to one which seemed gradually to descend into the earth. He made his way through the rank-growing grass and shrubs around, ventured still farther and farther, and at last approached the entrance to a dark passage. His curiosity led him to proceed; he was now fairly underground, and beheld, where scarcely a ray of light was visible, a round opening in the earth. As he was standing close to the side, a spectre appeared wrapped in a large mantle. The place became suddenly bright; and the affrighted rustic saw before him the famed old brewing copper, filled with shining gold pieces, of which he had heard so much from the lips of his great-grandmother.

He was sadly perplexed to know what to do, whether he should go, or venture to take a piece. Just then the spirit spoke: "You may take one, and come again every day for the same, but take only one at a time—no more!"

Upon this he disappeared, and the man laid hands upon the gold piece. With a beating heart, half pleasure, and half dread, he hastened back again, set a mark upon the place, and so went, gazing a thousand times upon the spectre's present by the way, to his own house. The day following, he repeated the pleasant experiment; the spirit indeed was not there, but there was the brewing vessel full of gold. He took another piece and went his way, and thus it continued the second, the third and fourth day; each bringing its tribute of a gold piece for more than the space of a year.

His humble abode became gradually metamorphosed into a

tately building; many acres of ground were added, herds were een pasturing in his fields, and no rustic in the village could do the hings which he did. But the more his property increased, the nore nettlesome did our rustic become. "Wherefore," said he, ' should I labour? I who may sit down and take my ease? "

With this view he hired both men and maid-servants to cultivate his grounds, while he was seated in a new arm-chair, or rode out on pretty hackney to view his crops of corn which he himself used ormerly to sow. In fact his daily visit to the great brewing copper onstituted his sole exertion. Mammon was hourly taking stronger possession of his soul; his pride began to equal his avarice; and though a gold piece was worth nearly twenty dollars, the thought ame into his mind that it was growing rather a heavy job to walk, r more properly, to climb uphill daily for the sake of a single gold piece, so steep too as it was, and he inwardly resolved to bring back two pieces the very next time.

This he did, and continued the practice for above a month. Yet till not content with this double pay, he said to himself:

"Oh, lord, what a bore it is to carry on this eternal daily abour, all for the sake of a couple of gold pieces. It is quite clear nat the whole of the treasure is meant for me, and whether I receive all at once, or by dribbling it out thus without end, it comes to he same thing. So I will go, heaven willing, and empty this fine rewing copper at a single swoop, and henceforward I shall need o give myself no further trouble! "

Accordingly he took a number of bags, and went panting with hem up the mountain: for he had grown fat and pursy with too nuch leisure and good living, so that he was quite exhausted by the ime he reached the well-known entrance. He sat himself down o recover breath, and was glad to think that these plaguy journeys would now be at an end, beginning even to speculate what he hould next undertake, when he beheld the whole of the bags well tuffed standing in his own house; whether a noble manor, becom- ng a knight, should be his; whether he would first set up his coach nd four; what a grand table he would keep; what noble uests around him; and how he would carouse with them in spite f the knight of the neighbouring castle of Kyffhausen and all is kin.

With this he stood bolt upright, took his sacks, and disappeared long the dark passage. Now he stood close to the brewing copper, hich, in spite of all he had gradually deducted out of it, appeared o be newly filled up to the very brim with gold. He knelt down ith his first bag at the side, put both his hands into the gold, and as on the point of making the first draught for his sack, when ehold, suddenly the whole vessel fell out of his grasp with hideous in, deep and deeper into the vault; fire-brands and brimstone

blazed around him, and the disappointed wretch fell back almost in a swoon.

Away went all the treasure; and along with it all his glorious dreams and all his castles in the air. No brewing copper appeared more, though his cupidity was great as before, which he might easily have satisfied with a gold piece daily, had he known how to rest content when he was well.

It is thus that avarice revenges itself upon its worshippers.

LUDWIG TIECK

1773–1853

THE ELVES

"WHERE is our little Mary?" said the father.

"She is playing out upon the green there, with our neighbour's boy," replied the mother.

"I wish they may not run away and lose themselves," said he; "they are so thoughtless."

The mother looked for the little ones, and brought them their evening luncheon. "It is warm," said the boy; "and Mary had a longing for the red cherries."

"Have a care, children," said the mother, "and do not run too far from home, and not into the wood; father and I are going to the fields."

Little Andres answered: "Never fear, the wood frightens us; we shall sit here by the house, where there are people near us."

The mother went in, and soon came out again with her husband. They locked the door, and turned towards the fields to look after their labourers, and see their hay-harvest in the meadow. Their house lay upon a little green height, encircled by a pretty ring of paling, which likewise enclosed their fruit and flower garden. The hamlet stretched somewhat deeper down, and on the other side lay the castle of the Count. Martin rented the large farm from this nobleman; and was living in contentment with his wife and only child; for he yearly saved some money, and had the prospect of becoming a man of substance by his industry, for the ground was productive, and the Count not illiberal.

As he walked with his wife to the fields, he gazed cheerfully round, and said, "What a different look this quarter has, Brigitta, from the place we lived in formerly! Here it is all so green; the whole village is bedecked with thick-spreading fruit trees; the ground is full of beautiful herbs and flowers; all the houses are cheerful and cleanly, the inhabitants are at their ease: nay, I could almost fancy that the woods are greener here than elsewhere, and the sky bluer; and, so far as the eye can reach, you have pleasure and delight in beholding the bountiful earth."

"And whenever you cross the stream," said Brigitta, "you are,

as it were, in another world, all is so dreary and withered; but every traveller declares that our village is the fairest in the country far and near."

"All but that fir-ground," said her husband; "do but look back to it, how dark and dismal that solitary spot is lying in the gay scene; the dingy fir trees with the smoky huts behind them, the ruined stalls, the brook flowing past with a sluggish melancholy."

"It is true," replied Brigitta; "if you but approach that spot, you grow disconsolate and sad, you know not why. What sort of people can they be that live there, and keep themselves so separate from the rest of us, as if they had an evil conscience?"

"A miserable crew," replied the young farmer: "gipsies, seemingly, that steal and cheat in other quarters, and have their hoard and hiding-place here. I wonder only that his lordship suffers them."

"Who knows," said the wife, with an accent of pity, "but perhaps they may be poor people, wishing, out of shame, to conceal their poverty; for, after all, no one can say aught ill of them; the only thing is, that they do not go to church, and none knows how they live; for the little garden, which indeed seems altogether waste, cannot possibly support them; and fields they have none."

"God knows," said Martin, as they went along, "what trade they follow; no mortal comes to them; for the place they live in is as if bewitched and excommunicated, so that even our wildest fellows will not venture into it."

Such conversation they pursued while walking to the fields. That gloomy spot they spoke of lay aside from the hamlet. In a dell, begirt with firs, you might behold a hut, and various ruined office-houses; rarely was smoke seen to mount from it, still more rarely did men appear there; though at times curious people, venturing somewhat nearer, had perceived upon the bench before the hut some hideous women, in ragged clothes, dandling in their arms some children equally dirty and ill-favoured; black dogs were running up and down upon the boundary; and, of an evening, a man of monstrous size was seen to cross the foot-bridge of the brook and disappear in the hut; and in the darkness various shapes were observed, moving like shadows round a fire in the open air. This piece of ground, the firs, and the ruined huts formed in truth a strange contrast with the bright green landscape, the white houses of the hamlet, and the stately new-built castle.

The two little ones had now eaten their fruit; it came into their heads to run races; and the little nimble Mary always got the start of the less active Andres. "It is not fair," cried Andres at last: "let us try it for some length, then we shall see who wins."

"As thou wilt," said Mary; "only to the brook we must not run."

"No," said Andres; "but there, on the hill, stands the large

pear tree, a quarter of a mile from this. I shall run by the left, round past the fir-ground; thou canst try it by the right over the fields; so we do not meet till we get up, and then we shall see which of us is swifter."

"Done," cried Mary, and began to run; "for we shall not mar one another by the way, and my father says it is as far to the hill by that side of the gipsies' house as by this."

Andres had already started, and Mary, turning to the right, could no longer see him. "It is very silly," said she to herself. "I have only to take heart, and run along the bridge, past the hut, and through the yard, and I shall certainly be first." She was already standing by the brook and the clump of firs. "Shall I? No: it is too frightful," said she. A little white dog was standing on the farther side, and barking with might and main. In her terror, Mary thought the dog some monster, and sprang back. "Fy! fy!" said she: "the dolt is gone half-way by this time, while I stand here considering." The little dog kept barking, and, as she looked at it more narrowly, it seemed no longer frightful, but, on the contrary, quite pretty: it had a red collar round its neck, with a glittering bell; and as it raised its head, and shook itself in barking, the little bell sounded with the finest tinkle. "Well, I must risk it!" cried she: "I will run for life; quick, quick, I am through; certainly to Heaven, they cannot eat me up alive in half a minute!" And with this, the gay, courageous little Mary sprang along the foot-bridge; passed the dog, which ceased its barking and began to fawn on her; and in a moment she was standing on the other bank, and the black firs all round concealed from view her father's house and the rest of the landscape.

But what was her astonishment when here! The loveliest, most variegated flower-garden lay round her; tulips, roses and lilies were glittering in the fairest colours; blue and gold-red butterflies were wavering in the blossoms; cages of shining wire were hung on the espaliers, with many-coloured birds in them, singing beautiful songs; and children, in short white frocks, with flowing yellow hair and brilliant eyes, were frolicking about; some playing with lambkins, some feeding the birds, or gathering flowers, and giving them to one another; some, again, were eating cherries, grapes and ruddy apricots. No hut was to be seen; but instead of it, a large fair house, with a brazen door and lofty statues, stood glancing in the middle of the space. Mary was confounded with surprise, and knew not what to think; but, not being bashful, she went right up to the first of the children, held out her hand, and wished the little creature good even.

"Art thou come to visit us, then?" said the glittering child; "I saw thee running, playing on the other side, but thou wert frightened for our little dog."

"So you are not gipsies and rogues," said Mary, "as Andres always told me! He is a stupid thing, and talks of much he does not understand."

"Stay with us," said the strange little girl; "thou wilt like it well."

"But we are running a race."

"Thou wilt find thy comrade soon enough. There, take and eat."

Mary ate, and found the fruit more sweet than any she had ever tasted in her life before; and Andres, and the race, and the prohibition of her parents, were entirely forgotten.

A stately woman, in a shining robe, came towards them, and asked about the stranger child. "Fairest lady," said Mary, "I came running hither by chance, and now they wish to keep me."

"Thou art aware, Zerina," said the lady, "that she can be here but for a little while; besides, thou shouldst have asked my leave."

"I thought," said Zerina, "when I saw her admitted across the bridge, that I might do it; we have often seen her running in the fields, and thou thyself hast taken pleasure in her lively temper. She will have to leave us soon enough."

"No, I will stay here," said the little stranger; "for here it is so beautiful, and here I shall find the prettiest playthings, and store of berries and cherries to boot. On the other side it is not half so grand."

The gold-robed lady went away with a smile; and many of the children now came bounding round the happy Mary in their mirth, and twitched her, and incited her to dance; others brought her lambs, or curious playthings; others made music on instruments, and sang to it.

She kept, however, by the playmate who had first met her; for Zerina was the kindest and loveliest of them all. Little Mary cried and cried again: "I will stay with you for ever; I will stay with you, and you shall be my sisters"; at which the children all laughed, and embraced her. "Now, we shall have a royal sport," said Zerina. She ran into the palace, and returned with a little golden box, in which lay a quantity of seeds, like glittering dust. She lifted of it with her little hand, and scattered some grains on the green earth. Instantly the grass began to move, as in waves; and, after a few moments, bright rose-bushes started from the ground, shot rapidly up, and budded all at once, while the sweetest perfume filled the place. Mary also took a little of the dust, and, having scattered it, she saw white lilies, and the most variegated pinks, pushing up. At a signal from Zerina, the flowers disappeared, and others rose in their room. "Now," said Zerina,

" look for something greater." She laid two pine-seeds in the ground, and stamped them in sharply with her foot. Two green bushes stood before them. " Grasp me fast," said she; and Mary threw her arms about the slender form. She felt herself borne upwards; for the trees were springing under them with the greatest speed; the tall pines waved to and fro, and the two children held each other fast embraced, swinging this way and that in the red clouds of the twilight, and kissed each other; while the rest were climbing up and down the trunks with quick dexterity, pushing and teasing one another with loud laughter when they met; if any one fell down in the press, it flew through the air, and sank slowly and surely to the ground. At length Mary was beginning to be frightened; and the other little child sang a few loud tones, and the trees again sank down, and set them on the ground as gradually as they had lifted them before to the clouds.

They next went through the brazen door of the palace. Here many fair women, elderly and young, were sitting in the round hall, partaking of the fairest fruits, and listening to glorious invisible music. In the vaulting of the ceiling, palms, flowers and groves stood painted, among which little figures of children were sporting and winding in every graceful posture; and with the tones of the music, the images altered and glowed with the most burning colours; now the blue and green were sparkling like radiant light, now these tints faded back in paleness, the purple flamed up, and the gold took fire; and then the naked children seemed to be alive among the flower-garlands, and to draw breath, and emit it through their ruby-coloured lips; so that by fits you could see the glance of their little white teeth, and the lighting up of their azure eyes.

From the hall, a stair of brass led down to a subterranean chamber. Here lay much gold and silver, and precious stones of every hue shone out between them. Strange vessels stood along the walls, and all seemed filled with costly things. The gold was worked into many forms, and glittered with the friendliest red. Many little dwarfs were busied sorting the pieces from the heap, and putting them in the vessels; others, hunchbacked, and bandy-legged, with long red noses, were tottering slowly along, half-bent to the ground, under full sacks, which they bore as millers do their grain, and, with much panting, shaking out the gold-dust on the ground. Then they darted awkwardly to the right and left, and caught the rolling balls that were like to run away, and it happened now and then that one in his eagerness overset the other, so that both fell heavily and clumsily to the ground. They made angry faces, and looked askance as Mary laughed at their gestures and their ugliness. Behind them sat an old crumpled little man, whom Zerina reverently greeted; he thanked her with a grave inclination of his head. He held a sceptre in his hand, and wore a crown

upon his brow, and all the other dwarfs appeared to regard him as their master, and obey his nod.

" What, more wanted? " asked he, with a surly voice, as the children came a little nearer. Mary was afraid, and did not speak; but her companion answered, they were only come to look about them in the chambers. " Still your old child's tricks! " replied the dwarf. " Will there never be an end to idleness? " With this, he turned again to his employment, kept his people weighing and sorting the ingots; some he sent away on errands, some he chid with angry tones.

" Who is the gentleman? " said Mary.

" Our Metal-Prince," replied Zerina, as they walked along.

They seemed once more to reach the open air, for they were standing by a lake, yet no sun appeared, and they saw no sky above their heads. A little boat received them, and Zerina steered it diligently forwards. It shot rapidly along. On gaining the middle of the lake, the stranger saw that multitudes of pipes, channels and brooks were spreading from the little sea in every direction. " These waters to the right," said Zerina, " flow beneath your garden, and this is why it blooms so freshly; but the other side we get down into the great stream." On a sudden, out of all the channels, and from every quarter of the lake, came a crowd of little children swimming up; some wore garlands of sedge and water-lily; some had red stems of coral, others were blowing on crooked shells; a tumultuous noise echoed merrily from the dark shores; among the children might be seen the fairest women sporting the waters, and often several of the children sprang about some one of them, and with kisses hung upon her neck and shoulders. All saluted the strangers; and these steered onwards through the revelry out of the lake, into a little river, which grew narrower and narrower. At last the boat came aground. The strangers took their leave, and Zerina knocked against the cliff. This opened like a door, and a female form, all red, assisted them to mount. " Are you all brisk here? " inquired Zerina.

" They are just at work," replied the other, " and happy as they could wish; indeed, the heat is very pleasant."

They went up a winding stair, and on a sudden Mary found herself in a most resplendent hall, so that, as she entered, her eyes were dazzled by the radiance. Flame-coloured tapestry covered the walls with a purple glow; and when her eye had grown a little used to it, the stranger saw, to her astonishment, that, in the tapestry, there were figures moving up and down in dancing joyfulness; in form so beautiful, and of so fair proportions, that nothing could be seen more graceful; their bodies were as of red crystal, so that it appeared as if the blood were visible within them, flowing and playing in its courses. They smiled on the stranger, and saluted

her with various bows; but as Mary was about approaching nearer them, Zerina plucked her sharply back, crying: "Thou wilt burn thyself, my little Mary, for the whole of it is fire."

Mary felt the heat. "Why do the pretty creatures not come out," said she, "and play with us?"

"As thou livest in the Air," replied the other, "so are they obliged to stay continually in Fire, and would faint and languish if they left it. Look now, how glad they are, how they laugh and shout; those down below spread out the fire-floods everywhere beneath the earth, and thereby the flowers, and fruits and wine are made to flourish; these red streams, again, are to run beside the brooks of water; and thus the fiery creatures are kept ever busy and glad. But for thee it is too hot here; let us return to the garden."

In the garden, the scene had changed since they left it. The moonshine was lying on every flower; the birds were silent, and the children were asleep in complicated groups, among the green groves. Mary and her friend, however, did not feel fatigue, but walked about in the warm summer night, in abundant talk, till morning.

When the day dawned, they refreshed themselves on fruit and milk, and Mary said: "Suppose we go, by way of change, to the firs, and see how things look there?"

"With all my heart," replied Zerina; "thou wilt see our watchmen, too, and they will surely please thee; they are standing up among the trees on the mound." The two proceeded through the lower garden by pleasant groves, full of nightingales; then they ascended a vine hill; and at last, after long following the windings of a clear brook, arrived at the firs, and the height which bounded the domain. "How does it come," said Mary, "that we have to walk so far here, when, without, the circuit is so narrow?"

"I know not," said her friend; "but so it is."

They mounted to the dark firs, and a chill wind blew from without in their faces; a haze seemed lying far and wide over the landscape. On the top were many strange forms standing; with mealy, dusty faces; their misshapen heads not unlike those of white owls; they were clad in folded cloaks of shaggy wool; they held umbrellas of curious skins stretched out above them; and they waved and fanned themselves incessantly with large bat's wings, which flared out curiously beside the woollen roquelaures. "I could laugh, yet I am frightened," cried Mary.

"These are our good trusty watchmen," said her playmate; "they stand here and wave their fans, that cold anxiety and inexplicable fear may fall on every one that attempts to approach us. They are covered so, because without it is now cold and rainy, which they cannot bear. But snow, or wind, or cold air never reaches down to us; here is an everlasting spring and

summer: yet if these poor people on the top were not frequently relieved, they would certainly perish."

"But who are you, then?" said Mary, while again descending to the flowery fragrance; "or have you no name at all?"

"We are called the Elves," replied the friendly child; "people talk about us in the Earth, as I have heard."

They now perceived a mighty bustle on the green. "The fair Bird is come!" cried the children to them: all hastened to the hall. Here, as they approached, young and old were crowding over the threshold, all shouting for joy; and from within resounded a triumphant peal of music. Having entered, they perceived the vast circuit filled with the most varied forms, and all were looking upwards to a large Bird with glancing plumage, that was sweeping slowly round in the dome, and in its stately flight describing many a circle. The music sounded more gaily than before; the colours and lights alternated more rapidly. At last the music ceased; and the Bird, with a rustling noise, floated down upon a glittering crown that hung hovering in air under the high window, by which the hall was lighted from above. His plumage was purple and green, and shining golden streaks played through it; on his head there waved a diadem of feathers, so resplendent that they glanced like jewels. His bill was red, and his legs of a glancing blue. As he moved, the tints gleamed through each other, and the eye was charmed with their radiance. His size was as that of an eagle. But now he opened his glittering beak; and sweetest melodies came pouring from his moved breast, in finer tones than the love-sick nightingale gives forth; still stronger rose the song, and streamed like floods of Light, so that all, the very children themselves, were moved by it to tears of joy and rapture. When he ceased, all bowed before him; he again flew round the dome in circles, then darted through the door, and soared into the light heaven, where he shone far up like a red point, and then soon vanished from their eyes.

"Why are ye all so glad?" inquired Mary, bending to her fair playmate, who seemed smaller than yesterday.

"The King is coming!" said the little one; "many of us have never seen him, and whithersoever he turns his face, there is happiness and mirth; we have long looked for him, more anxiously than you look for spring when winter lingers with you; and now he has announced, by his fair herald, that he is at hand. This wise and glorious Bird, that has been sent to us by the King, is called Phœnix; he dwells far off in Arabia, on a tree, which there is no other that resembles on Earth, as in like manner there is no second Phœnix. When he feels himself grown old, he builds a pile of balm and incense, kindles it, and dies singing; and then, from the fragrant ashes, soars up the renewed Phœnix with unlessened

beauty. It is seldom he so wings his course that men behold him; and when once in centuries this does occur, they note it in their annals, and expect remarkable events. But now, my friend, thou and I must part; for the sight of the King is not permitted thee."

Then the lady with the golden robe came through the throng, and beckoning Mary to her, led her into a sequestered walk. "Thou must leave us, my dear child," said she; "the King is to hold his court here for twenty years, perhaps longer; and fruitfulness and blessings will spread far over the land, but chiefly here beside us; all the brooks and rivulets will become more bountiful, all the fields and gardens richer, the wine more generous, the meadows more fertile, and the woods more fresh and green; a milder air will blow, no hail shall hurt, no flood shall threaten. Take this ring, and think of us: but beware of telling any one of our existence; or we must fly this land, and thou and all around will lose the happiness and blessing of our neighbourhood. Once more, kiss thy playmate, and farewell." They issued from the walk; Zerina wept, Mary stooped to embrace her, and they parted. Already she was on the narrow bridge; the cold air was blowing on her back from the firs; the little dog barked with all its might, and rang its little bell; she looked round, then hastened over, for the darkness of the firs, the bleakness of the ruined huts, the shadows of the twilight, were filling her with terror.

"What a night my parents must have had on my account!" said she within herself, as she stept on the green; "and I dare not tell them where I have been, or what wonders I have witnessed, nor indeed would they believe me." Two men passing by saluted her, and as they went along, she heard them say: "What a pretty girl! Where can she come from?" With quickened steps she approached the house: but the trees which were hanging last night loaded with fruit were now standing dry and leafless; the house was differently painted, and a new barn had been built beside it. Mary was amazed, and thought she must be dreaming. In this perplexity she opened the door; and behind the table sat her father, between an unknown woman and a stranger youth. "Good God! Father," cried she, "where is my mother?"

"Thy mother!" said the woman, with a forecasting tone, and sprang towards her: "Ha, thou surely canst not—Yes, indeed, indeed thou art my lost, long-lost dear, only Mary!" She had recognised her by a little brown mole beneath the chin, as well as by her eyes and shape. All embraced her, all were moved with joy, and the parents wept. Mary was astonished that she almost reached to her father's stature; and she could not understand how her mother had become so changed and faded; she asked the name of the stranger youth. "It is our neighbour's Andres," said Martin. "How comest thou to us again, so unexpectedly, after

seven long years? Where hast thou been? Why didst thou never send us tidings of thee? "

"Seven years!" said Mary, and could not order her ideas and recollections. "Seven whole years?"

"Yes, yes," said Andres, laughing, and shaking her trustfully by the hand; "I have won the race, good Mary; I was at the pear tree and back again seven years ago, and thou, sluggish creature, art but just returned!"

They again asked, they pressed her; but remembering her instruction, she could answer nothing. It was they themselves chiefly that, by degrees, shaped a story for her: How, having lost her way, she had been taken up by a coach, and carried to a strange remote part, where she could not give the people any notion of her parents' residence; how she was conducted to a distant town, where certain worthy persons brought her up, and loved her; how they had lately died, and at length she had recollected her birthplace, and so returned. "No matter how it is!" exclaimed her mother; "enough that we have thee again, my little daughter, my own, my all!"

Andres waited supper, and Mary could not be at home in anything she saw. The house seemed small and dark; she felt astonished at her dress, which was clean and simple, but appeared quite foreign; she looked at the ring on her finger, and the gold of it glittered strangely, enclosing a stone of burning red. To her father's question, she replied that the ring also was a present from her benefactors.

She was glad when the hour of sleep arrived, and she hastened to her bed. Next morning she felt much more collected; she had now arranged her thoughts a little, and could better stand the questions of the people in the village, all of whom came in to bid her welcome. Andres was there too with the earliest, active, glad, and serviceable beyond all others. The blooming maiden of fifteen had made a deep impression on him; he had passed a sleepless night. The people of the castle likewise sent for Mary, and she had once more to tell her story to them, which was now grown quite familiar to her. The old Count and his Lady were surprised at her good breeding; she was modest, but not embarrassed; she made answer courteously in good phrases to all their questions; all fear of noble persons and their equipage had passed away from her; for when she measured these halls and forms by the wonders and the high beauty she had seen with the Elves in their hidden abode, this earthly splendour seemed but dim to her, the presence of men was almost mean. The young lords were charmed with her beauty.

It was now February. The trees were budding earlier than usual; the nightingale had never come so soon; the spring rose

fairer in the land than the oldest men could recollect it. In every quarter, little brooks gushed out to irrigate the pastures and meadows; the hills seemed heaving, the vines rose higher and higher, the fruit trees blossomed as they had never done; and a swelling fragrant blessedness hung suspended heavily in rosy clouds over the scene. All prospered beyond expectation; no rude day, no tempest-injured the fruits; the wine flowed blushing in immense grapes; and the inhabitants of the place felt astonished, and were captivated as in a sweet dream. The next year was like its forerunner; but men had now become accustomed to the marvellous. In autumn, Mary yielded to the pressing entreaties of Andres and her parents; she was betrothed to him, and in winter they were married.

She often thought with inward longing of her residence behind the fir trees; she continued serious and still. Beautiful as all that lay around her was, she knew of something yet more beautiful; and from the remembrance of this, a faint regret attuned her nature to soft melancholy. It smote her painfully when her father and mother talked about the gipsies and vagabonds that dwelt in the dark spot of ground. Often she was on the point of speaking out in defence of those good beings, whom she knew to be the benefactors of the land; especially to Andres, who appeared to take delight in zealously abusing them: yet still she repressed the word that was struggling to escape her bosom. So passed this year; in the next she was solaced by a little daughter, whom she named Elfrida, thinking of the designation of her friendly Elves.

The young people lived with Martin and Brigitta, the house being large enough for all; and helped their parents in conducting their now extended husbandry. The little Elfrida soon displayed peculiar faculties and gifts; for she could walk at a very early age, and could speak perfectly before she was a twelvemonth old; and after some few years she had become so wise and clever, and of such wondrous beauty, that all people regarded her with astonishment; and her mother could not keep away the thought that her child resembled one of those shining little ones in the space behind the firs. Elfrida cared not to be with other children; but seemed to avoid, with a sort of horror, their tumultuous amusements, and liked best to be alone. She would then retire into a corner of the garden, and read, or work diligently with her needle; often also you might see her sitting, as if deep sunk in thought; or violently walking up and down the alleys, speaking to herself. Her parents readily allowed her to have her will in these things, for she was healthy, and waxed apace; only her strange sagacious answers and observations often made them anxious. "Such wise children do not grow to age," her grandmother, Brigitta, many times observed; "they are too good for this world; the child, besides, is

beautiful beyond nature, and will never find its proper place on Earth."

The little girl had this peculiarity, that she was very loath to let herself be served by any one, but endeavoured to do everything herself. She was almost the earliest riser in the house; she washed herself carefully, and dressed without assistance: at night she was equally careful; she took special heed to pack up her clothes and washes with her own hands, allowing no one, not even her mother, to meddle with her articles. The mother humoured her in this caprice, not thinking it of any consequence. But what was her astonishment when, happening one holiday to insist, regardless of Elfrida's tears and screams, on dressing her out for a visit to the castle, she found upon her breast, suspended by a string, a piece of gold of a strange form, which she directly recognised as one of that sort she had seen in such abundance in the subterranean vault! The little thing was greatly frightened, and at last confessed that she had found it in the garden, and as she liked it much, had kept it carefully: she at the same time prayed so earnestly and pressingly to have it back, that Mary fastened it again on its former place, and, full of thoughts, went out with her in silence to the castle.

Sideways from the farm-house lay some offices for the storing of produce and implements; and behind these there was a little green, with an old grove, now visited by no one, as, from the new arrangement of the buildings, it lay too far from the garden. In this solitude Elfrida delighted most; and it occurred to nobody to interrupt her here, so that frequently her parents did not see her for half a day. One afternoon her mother chanced to be in these buildings, seeking for some lost article among the lumber, and she noticed that a beam of light was coming in, through a chink in the wall. She took a thought of looking through this aperture, and seeing what her child was busied with; and it happened that a stone was lying loose, and could be pushed aside, so that she obtained a view right into the grove. Elfrida was sitting there on a little bench, and beside her the well-known Zerina; and the children were playing and amusing one another in the kindliest unity. The Elf embraced her beautiful companion, and said mournfully: "Ah! dear little creature, as I sport with thee, so have I sported with thy mother, when she was a child; but you mortals so soon grow tall and thoughtful! It is very hard: wert thou but to be a child as long as I!"

"Willingly would I do it," said Elfrida; "but they all say I shall come to sense, and give over playing altogether; for I have great gifts, as they think, for growing wise. Ah! and then I shall see thee no more, thou dear Zerina! Yet it is with us, as with the fruit-tree flowers: how glorious the blossoming apple tree, with

its red bursting buds! It looks so stately and broad, and every one that passes under it thinks, surely something great will come of it; then the sun grows hot, and the buds come joyfully forth; but the wicked kernel is already there, which pushes off and casts away the fair flower s dress; and now, in pain and waxing, it can do nothing more, but must grow to fruit in harvest. An apple, to be sure, is pretty and refreshing; yet nothing to the blossom of spring. So is it also with us mortals; I am not glad in the least at growing to be a tall girl. Ah! could I but once visit you! "

" Since the King is with us," said Zerina, " it is quite impossible; but I will come to thee, my darling, often, often, and none shall see me either here or there. I will pass invisible through the air, or fly over to thee like a bird: Oh! we will be much, much together, while, thou art still little. What can I do to please thee? "

" Thou must like me very dearly," said Elfrida, " as I like thee in my heart: but come, let us make another rose."

Zerina took the well-known box from her bosom, threw two grains from it on the ground, and instantly a green bush stood before them, with two deep-red roses, bending their heads, as if to kiss each other. The children plucked them smiling, and the bush disappeared. " Oh that it would not die so soon! " said Elfrida; " this red child, this wonder of the Earth! "

" Give it me here," said the little Elf; then breathed thrice upon the budding rose, and kissed it thrice. " Now," said she, giving back the rose, " it will continue fresh and blooming till winter."

" I will keep it," said Elfrida, " as an image of thee; I will guard it in my little room, and kiss it night and morning, as if it were thyself."

" The sun is setting," said the other, " I must home." They embraced again, and Zerina vanished.

In the evening, Mary clasped her child to her breast with a feeling of alarm and veneration. She henceforth allowed the good little girl more liberty than formerly; and often calmed her husband, when he came to search for the child, which for some time he was wont to do, as her retiredness did not please him, and he feared that, in the end, it might make her silly, or even pervert her understanding. The mother often glided to the chink; and almost always found the bright Elf beside her child, employed in sport, or in earnest conversation.

" Wouldst thou like to fly? " inquired Zerina, once.

" Oh, well! How well! " replied Elfrida; and the fairy clasped her mortal playmate in her arms, and mounted with her from the ground, till they hovered above the grove. The mother, in alarm, forgot herself, and pushed out her head in terror to look after them; when Zerina, from the air, held up her finger, and threatened, yet smiled; then descended with the child, embraced

her, and disappeared. After this, it happened more than once that Mary was observed by her; and every time, the shining little creature shook her head, or threatened, yet with friendly looks.

Often, in disputing with her husband, Mary had said in her zeal: "Thou dost injustice to the poor people in the hut!" But when Andres pressed her to explain why she differed in opinion from the whole village, nay, from his Lordship himself, and how she could understand it better than the whole of them, she still broke off embarrassed, and became silent. One day, after dinner, Andres grew more violent than ever; and maintained that, by one means or another, the crew must be packed away, as a nuisance to the country; when his wife in anger said to him: "Hush! for they are benefactors to thee and to every one of us."

"Benefactors!" cried the other in astonishment. "These rogues and vagabonds!"

In her indignation, she was now at last tempted to relate to him, under promise of the strictest secrecy, the history of her youth: and as Andres at every word grew more incredulous, and shook his head in mockery, she took him by the hand and led him to the chink, where, to his amazement, he beheld the glittering Elf sporting with his child, and caressing her in the grove. He knew not what to say; an exclamation of astonishment escaped him, and Zerina raised her eyes. On the instant she grew pale, and trembled violently; not with friendly, but with indignant looks, she made the sign of threatening, and then said to Elfrida: "Thou canst not help it, dearest heart; but they will never learn sense, wise as they believe themselves." She embraced the little one with stormy haste; and then, in the shape of a raven, flew with hoarse cries over the garden, towards the firs.

In the evening, the little one was very still, she kissed her rose with tears; Mary felt depressed and frightened, Andres scarcely spoke. It grew dark. Suddenly there went a rustling through the trees; birds flew to and fro with wild screaming, thunder was heard to roll, the Earth shook, and tones of lamentation moaned in the air. Andres and his wife had not courage to rise; they shrouded themselves within the curtains, and with fear and trembling awaited the day. Towards morning it grew calmer; and all was silent when the sun, with his cheerful light, rose over the wood.

Andres dressed himself, and Mary now observed that the stone of the ring upon her finger had become quite pale. On opening the door, the sun shone clear on their faces, but the scene around them they could scarcely recognise. The freshness of the wood was gone; the hills were shrunk, the brooks were flowing languidly with scanty streams, the sky seemed grey; and when you turned to the firs, they were standing there, no darker or more dreary than the other trees. The huts behind them were no longer frightful; and several

inhabitants of the village came and told about the fearful night, and how they had been across the spot where the gipsies had lived; how these people must have left the place at last, for their huts were standing empty, and within had quite a common look, just like the dwellings of other poor people: some of their household gear was left behind.

Elfrida in secret said to her mother: "I could not sleep last night; and in my fright at the noise, I was praying from the bottom of my heart, when the door suddenly opened, and my playmate entered to take leave of me. She had a travelling-pouch slung round her, a hat on her head, and a large staff in her hand. She was very angry at thee; since on thy account she had now to suffer the severest and most painful punishments, as she had always been so fond of thee; for all of them, she said, were very loath to leave this quarter."

Mary forbade her to speak of this; and now the ferryman came across the river, and told them new wonders. As it was growing dark, a stranger man of large size had come to him, and hired his boat till sunrise; and with this condition, that the boatman should remain quiet in his house, at least should not cross the threshold of his door. "I was frightened," continued the old man, "and the strange bargain would not let me sleep. I slipped softly to the window, and looked towards the river. Great clouds were driving restlessly through the sky, and the distant woods were rustling fearfully; it was as if my cottage shook, and moans and lamentations glided round it. On a sudden I perceived a white streaming light, that grew broader and broader, like many thousands of falling stars; sparkling and waving, it proceeded forward from the dark fir ground, moved over the fields, and spread itself along towards the river. Then I heard a trampling, a jingling, a bustling, and rushing, nearer and nearer; it went forwards to my boat, and all stept into it, men and women, as it seemed, and children; and the tall stranger ferried them over. In the river were by the boat swimming many thousands of glittering forms; in the air, white clouds and lights were wavering; and all lamented and bewailed that they must travel forth so far, far away, and leave their beloved dwelling. The noise of the rudder and the water creaked and gurgled between whiles, and then suddenly there would be silence. Many a time the boat landed, and went back, and was again laden; many heavy casks, too, they took along with them, which multitudes of horrid-looking little fellows carried and rolled; whether they were devils or goblins, Heaven only knows. Then came, in waving brightness, a stately freight; it seemed an old man mounted on a small white horse, and all were crowding round him. I saw nothing of the horse but its head; for the rest of it was covered with costly glittering cloths and trappings: on his brow the old man had a crown, so bright, that as

he came across I thought the sun was rising there, and the redness of the dawn glimmering in my eyes. Thus it went on all night; I at last fell asleep in the tumult, half in joy, half in terror. In the morning all was still; but the river is, as it were, run off, and I know not how I am to steer my boat in it now."

The same year there came a blight; the woods died away, the springs ran dry; and the scene, which had once been the joy of every traveller, was in autumn standing waste, naked, and bald; scarcely showing here and there, in the sea of sand, a spot or two where grass, with a dingy greenness, still grew up. The fruit trees all withered, the vines faded away, and the aspect of the place became so melancholy that the Count, with his people, next year left the castle, which in time decayed and fell to ruins.

Elfrida gazed on her rose day and night with deep longing, and thought of her kind playmate; and as it drooped and withered, so did she also hang her head; and before the spring, the little maiden had herself faded away. Mary often stood upon the spot before the hut, and wept for the happiness that had departed. She wasted herself away like her child, and in a few years she too was gone. Old Martin, with his son-in-law, returned to the quarter where he had lived before.

E. T. W. HOFFMANN

1776-1822

THE CREMONA VIOLIN

Councillor Krespel was one of the strangest, oddest men I ever met with in my life. When I went to live in H—— for a time the whole town was full of talk about him, as he happened to be just then in the midst of one of the very craziest of his schemes. Krespel had the reputation of being both a clever, learned lawyer and a skilful diplomatist. One of the reigning princes of Germany—not, however, one of the most powerful—had appealed to him for assistance in drawing up a memorial, which he was desirous of presenting at the Imperial Court with the view of furthering his legitimate claims upon a certain strip of territory. The project was crowned with the happiest success; and as Krespel had once complained that he could never find a dwelling sufficiently comfortable to suit him, the prince, to reward him for the memorial, undertook to defray the cost of building a house which Krespel might erect just as he pleased. Moreover, the prince was willing to purchase any site that he should fancy. This offer, however, the Councillor would not accept; he insisted that the house should be built in his garden, situated in a very beautiful neighbourhood outside the town walls. So he bought all kinds of materials and had them carted out. Then he might have been seen day after day, attired in his curious garments (which he had made himself according to certain fixed rules of his own), slaking the lime, riddling the sand, packing up the bricks and stones in regular heaps, and so on. All this he did without once consulting an architect or thinking about a plan. One fine day, however, he went to an experienced builder of the town and requested him to be in his garden at daybreak the next morning, with all his journeymen and apprentices, and a large body of labourers, etc., to build him his house. Naturally the builder asked for the architect's plan, and was not a little astonished when Krespel replied that none was needed, and that things would turn out all right in the end, just as he wanted them. Next morning, when the builder and his men came to the place, they found a trench drawn out in the shape of an exact square; and Krespel said, " Here's where you must lay the foundations; then carry up the walls until I say they are high enough." " With-

out windows and doors, and without partition walls? " broke in the builder, as if alarmed at Krespel's mad folly. " Do what I tell you, my dear sir," replied the Councillor quite calmly; " leave the rest to me; it will be all right." It was only the promise of high pay that could induce the builder to proceed with the ridiculous building, but none has ever been erected under merrier circumstances. As there was an abundant supply of food and drink, the workmen never left their work; and amidst their continuous laughter the four walls were run up with incredible quickness, until one day Krespel cried, " Stop! " Then the workmen, laying down trowel and hammer, came down from the scaffoldings and gathered round Krespel in a circle, whilst every laughing face was asking, " Well, and what now? " " Make way! " cried Krespel; and then running to one end of the garden, he strode slowly towards the square of brickwork. When he came close to the wall he shook his head in a dissatisfied manner, ran to the other end of the garden, again strode slowly towards the brickwork square, and proceeded to act as before. These tactics he pursued several times, until at length, running his sharp nose hard against the wall, he cried, " Come here, come here, men! break me a door in here! Here's where I want a door made! " He gave the exact dimensions in feet and inches, and they did as he bid them. Then he stepped inside the structure, and smiled with satisfaction as the builder remarked that the walls were just the height of a good two-storeyed house. Krespel walked thoughtfully backwards and forwards across the space within, the bricklayers behind him with hammers and picks, and wherever he cried, " Make a window here, six feet high by four feet broad! " " There a little window, three feet by two! " a hole was made in a trice.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that I came to H——; and it was highly amusing to see how hundreds of people stood round about the garden and raised a loud shout whenever the stones flew out and a new window appeared where nobody had for a moment expected it. And in the same manner Krespel proceeded with the buildings and fittings of the rest of the house, and with all the work necessary to that end; everything had to be done on the spot in accordance with the instructions which the Councillor gave from time to time. However, the absurdity of the whole business, the growing conviction that things would in the end turn out better than might have been expected, but above all, Krespel's generosity—which, indeed, cost him nothing—kept them all in good-humour. Thus were the difficulties overcome which necessarily arose out of this eccentric way of building, and in a short time there was a completely finished house, its outside, indeed, presenting a most extraordinary appearance, no two windows, etc., being alike, but on the other hand the interior arrangements suggested

a peculiar feeling of comfort. All who entered the house bore witness to the truth of this; and I, too, experienced it myself when I was taken in by Krespel after I had become more intimate with him. For hitherto I had not exchanged a word with this eccentric man; his building had occupied him so much that he had not even once been to Professor M——'s to dinner, as he was in the habit of doing on Tuesdays. Indeed, in reply to a special invitation, he sent word that he should not set foot over the threshold before the house-warming of his new building took place. All his friends and acquaintances, therefore, confidently looked forward to a great banquet; but Krespel invited nobody except the masters, journeymen, apprentices, and labourers who had built the house. He entertained them with the choicest viands; bricklayers' apprentices devoured partridge pies regardless of consequences; young joiners polished off roast pheasants with the greatest success; whilst hungry labourers helped themselves for once to the choicest morsels of *truffes fricassées*. In the evening their wives and daughters came, and there was a great ball. After waltzing a short while with the wives of the masters, Krespel sat down amongst the town musicians, took a violin in his hand, and directed the orchestra until daylight.

On the Tuesday after this festival, which exhibited Councillor Krespel in the character of a friend of the people, I at length saw him appear, to my no little joy, at Professor M——'s. Anything more strange and fantastic than Krespel's behaviour it would be impossible to find. He was so stiff and awkward in his movements, that he looked every moment as if he would run up against something or do some damage. But he did not; and the lady of the house seemed to be well aware that he would not, for she did not grow a shade paler when he rushed with heavy steps round a table crowded with beautiful cups, or when he manœuvred near a large mirror that reached down to the floor, or even when he seized a flower-pot of beautifully painted porcelain and swung it round in the air as if desirous of making its colours play. Moreover, before dinner he subjected everything in the Professor's room to a most minute examination; he also took down a picture from the wall and hung it up again, standing on one of the cushioned chairs to do so. At the same time he talked a good deal and vehemently; at one time his thoughts kept leaping, as it were, from one subject to another (this was most conspicuous during dinner); at another, he was unable to have done with an idea; seizing upon it again and again, he gave it all sorts of wonderful twists and turns, and couldn't get back into the ordinary track until something else took hold of his fancy. Sometimes his voice was rough and harsh and screeching, and sometimes it was low and drawling and singing; but at no time did it harmonise with what he was talking about. Music was the subject of conversation; the praises of a new composer were

being sung, when Krespel, smiling, said in his low, singing tones, "I wish the devil with his pitchfork would hurl that atrocious garbler of music millions of fathoms down to the bottomless pit of hell!" Then he burst out passionately and wildly, "She is an angel of heaven, nothing but pure God-given music!—the paragon and queen of song!"—and tears stood in his eyes. To understand this, we had to go back to a celebrated *artiste*, who had been the subject of conversation an hour before.

Just at this time a roast hare was on the table; I noticed that Krespel carefully removed every particle of meat from the bones on his plate, and was most particular in his inquiries after the hare's feet; these the Professor's little five-year-old daughter now brought to him with a very pretty smile. Besides, the children had cast many friendly glances towards Krespel during dinner; now they rose and drew nearer to him, yet not without signs of timorous awe. What's the meaning of that? thought I to myself. Dessert was brought in; then the Councillor took a little box from his pocket, in which he had a miniature lathe of steel. This he immediately screwed fast to the table, and turning the bones with incredible skill and rapidity, he made all sorts of little fancy boxes and balls, which the children received with cries of delight. Just as we were rising from table, the Professor's niece asked, "And what is our Antonia doing?" Krespel's face was like that of one who has bitten of a sour orange and wants to look as if it were a sweet one; but this expression soon changed into the likeness of a hideous mask, whilst he laughed behind it with downright, bitter, fierce, and, as it seemed to me, satanic scorn. "Our Antonia? our dear Antonia?" he asked in his drawling, disagreeable, singing way. The Professor hastened to intervene; in the reproving glance which he gave his niece I read that she had touched a point likely to stir up unpleasant memories in Krespel's heart. "How are you getting on with your violins?" interposed the Professor in a jovial manner, taking the Councillor by both hands. Then Krespel's countenance cleared up, and with a firm voice he replied, "Capitally, Professor; you recollect my telling you of the lucky chance which threw that splendid Amati[1] into my hands. Well, I've only cut it open to-day—not before to-day. I hope Antonia has carefully taken the rest of it to pieces." "Antonia is a good child," remarked the Professor. "Yes, indeed, that she is," cried the Councillor, whisking himself round; then, seizing his hat and stick, he hastily rushed out of the room. I saw in the mirror how that tears were standing in his eyes.

[1] The Amati were a celebrated family of violin-makers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, belonging to Cremona in Italy. They form the connecting link between the Brescian school of makers and the greatest of all makers, Straduarius and Guarnerius.

As soon as the Councillor was gone, I at once urged the Professor to explain to me what Krespel had to do with violins, and particularly with Antonia. "Well," replied the Professor, "not only is the Councillor a remarkably eccentric fellow altogether, but he practises violin-making in his own crack-brained way." "Violin-making!" I exclaimed, perfectly astonished. "Yes," continued the Professor, "according to the judgment of men who understand the thing, Krespel makes the very best violins that can be found nowadays; formerly he would frequently let other people play on those in which he had been especially successful, but that's been all over and done with now for a long time. As soon as he has finished a violin he plays on it himself for one or two hours, with very remarkable power and with the most exquisite expression, then he hangs it up beside the rest, and never touches it again or suffers anybody else to touch it. If a violin by any of the eminent old masters is hunted up anywhere, the Councillor buys it immediately, no matter what the price put upon it. But he plays it as he does his own violins, only once; then he takes it to pieces in order to examine closely its inner structure, and should he fancy he hasn't found exactly what he sought for, he in a pet throws the pieces into a big chest, which is already full of the remains of broken violins." "But who and what is Antonia?" I inquired hastily and impetuously. "Well, now, that," continued the Professor, "that is a thing which might very well make me conceive an unconquerable aversion to the Councillor, were I not convinced that there is some peculiar secret behind it, for he is such a good-natured fellow at bottom as to be sometimes guilty of weakness. When we came to H——, several years ago, he led the life of an anchorite, along with an old housekeeper, in —— Street. Soon, by his oddities, he excited the curiosity of his neighbours; and immediately he became aware of this, he sought and made acquaintances. Not only in my house but everywhere we became so accustomed to him that he grew to be indispensable. In spite of his rude exterior, even the children liked him, without ever proving a nuisance to him; for, notwithstanding all their friendly passages together, they always retained a certain timorous awe of him, which secured him against all over-familiarity. You have to-day had an example of the way in which he wins their hearts by his ready skill in various things. We all took him at first for a crusty old bachelor, and he never contradicted us. After he had been living here some time, he went away, nobody knew where, and returned at the end of some months. The evening following his return his windows were lit up to an unusual extent! This alone was sufficient to arouse his neighbours' attention, and they soon heard the surpassingly beautiful voice of a female singing to the accompaniment of a piano. Then the music of a violin was heard chiming in and entering upon a

keen ardent contest with the voice. They knew at once that the player was the Councillor. I myself mixed in the large crowd which had gathered in front of his house to listen to this extraordinary concert; and I must confess that, besides this voice and the peculiar, deep, soul-stirring impression which the execution made upon me, the singing of the most celebrated *artistes* whom I had ever heard seemed to me feeble and void of expression. Until then I had had no conception of such long-sustained notes, of such nightingale trills, of such undulations of musical sound, of such swelling up to the strength of organ-notes, of such dying away to the faintest whisper. There was not one whom the sweet witchery did not enthral; and when the singer ceased, nothing but soft sighs broke the impressive silence. Somewhere about midnight the Councillor was heard talking violently, and another male voice seemed, to judge from the tones, to be reproaching him, whilst at intervals the broken words of a sobbing girl could be detected. The Councillor continued to shout with increasing violence, until he fell into that drawling, singing way that you know. He was interrupted by a loud scream from the girl, and then all was as still as death. Suddenly a loud racket was heard on the stairs; a young man rushed out sobbing, threw himself into a post-chaise which stood below, and drove rapidly away. The next day the Councillor was very cheerful, and nobody had the courage to question him about the events of the previous night. But on inquiring of the housekeeper, we gathered that the Councillor had brought home with him an extraordinarily pretty young lady whom he called Antonia, and she it was who had sung so beautifully. A young man also had come along with them; he had treated Antonia very tenderly, and must evidently have been her betrothed. But he, since the Councillor peremptorily insisted on it, had had to go away again in a hurry. What the relations between Antonia and the Councillor are has remained until now a secret, but this much is certain, that he tyrannises over the poor girl in the most hateful fashion. He watches her as Doctor Bartholo watches his ward in the *Barber of Seville*; she hardly dare show herself at the window; and if, yielding now and again to her earnest entreaties, he takes her into society, he follows her with Argus eyes, and will on no account suffer a musical note to be sounded, far less let Antonia sing—indeed, she is not permitted to sing in his own house. Antonia's singing on that memorable night has therefore come to be regarded by the townspeople in the light of a tradition of some marvellous wonder that suffices to stir the heart and the fancy; and even those who did not hear it often exclaim, whenever any other singer attempts to display her powers in the place, ' What sort of a wretched squeaking do you call that? Nobody but Antonia knows how to sing.' ''

Having a singular weakness for such-like fantastic histories, I

found it necessary, as may easily be imagined, to make Antonia's acquaintance. I had myself often enough heard the popular sayings about her singing, but had never imagined that that exquisite *artiste* was living in the place, held a captive in the bonds of this eccentric Krespel like the victim of a tyrannous sorcerer. Naturally enough I heard in my dreams on the following night Antonia's marvellous voice, and as she besought me in the most touching manner in a glorious *adagio* movement (very ridiculously it seemed to me, as if I had composed it myself) to save her—I soon resolved, like a second Astolpho,[1] to penetrate into Krespel's house, as if into another Alcina's magic castle, and deliver the queen of song from her ignominious fetters.

It all came about in a different way from what I had expected; I had seen the Councillor scarcely more than two or three times, and eagerly discussed with him the best method of constructing violins, when he invited me to call and see him. I did so; and he showed me his treasures of violins. There were fully thirty of them hanging up in a closet; one amongst them bore conspicuously all the marks of great antiquity (a carved lion's head, etc.) and, hung up higher than the rest, and surmounted by a crown of flowers, it seemed to exercise a queenly supremacy over them. "This violin," said Krespel, on my making some inquiry relative to it, "this violin is a very remarkable and curious specimen of the work of some unknown master, probably of Tartini's[2] age. I am perfectly convinced that there is something especially exceptional in its inner construction, and that, if I took it to pieces, a secret would be revealed to me which I have long been seeking to discover, but—laugh at me if you like—this senseless thing which only gives signs of life and sound as I make it, often speaks to me in a strange way of itself. The first time I played upon it I somehow fancied that I was only the magnetiser who has the power of moving his subject to reveal of his own accord in words the visions of his inner nature. Don't go away with the belief that I am such a fool as to attach even the slightest importance to such fantastic notions, and yet it's certainly strange that I could never prevail upon myself to cut open that dumb lifeless thing there. I am very pleased now that I have not cut it open, for since Antonia has been with me I sometimes play to her upon this violin. For Antonia is fond of it—very fond

[1] A reference to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. Astolpho, an English cousin of Orlando, was a great boaster, but generous, courteous, gay, and remarkably handsome; he was carried to Alcina's island on the back of a whale.

[2] Giuseppe Tartini, born in 1692, died in 1770, was one of the most celebrated violinists of the eighteenth century, and the discoverer (in 1714) of "resultant tones," or "Tartini's tones," as they are frequently called. Most of his life was spent at Padua. He did much to advance the art of the violinist, both by his compositions for that instrument and by his treatise on its capabilities.

of it." As the Councillor uttered these words with visible signs of emotion, I felt encouraged to hazard the question, "Will you not play it to me, Councillor?" Krespel made a wry face, and falling into his drawling, singing way, said, "No, my good sir!" and that was an end of the matter. Then I had to look at all sorts of rare curiosities, the greater part of them childish trifles; at last, thrusting his arm into a chest, he brought out a folded piece of paper, which he pressed into my hand, adding solemnly, "You are a lover of art; take this present as a priceless memento, which you must value at all times above everything else." Therewith he took me by the shoulders and gently pushed me towards the door, embracing me on the threshold. That is to say, I was in a symbolical manner virtually kicked out of doors. Unfolding the paper, I found a piece of a first string of a violin about an eighth of an inch in length, with the words, "A piece of the treble string with which the deceased Stamitz [1] strung his violin for the last concert at which he ever played."

This summary dismissal at mention of Antonia's name led me to infer that I should never see her; but I was mistaken, for on my second visit to the Councillor's I found her in his room, assisting him to put a violin together. At first sight Antonia did not make a strong impression; but soon I found it impossible to tear myself away from her blue eyes, her sweet rosy lips, her uncommonly graceful, lovely form. She was very pale; but a shrewd remark or a merry sally would call up a winning smile on her face and suffuse her cheeks with a deep burning flush, which, however, soon faded away to a faint rosy glow. My conversation with her was quite unconstrained, and yet I saw nothing whatever of the Argus-like watchings on Krespel's part which the Professor had imputed to him; on the contrary, his behaviour moved along the customary lines, nay, he even seemed to approve of my conversation with Antonia. So I often stepped in to see the Councillor; and as we became accustomed to each other's society, a singular feeling of homeliness, taking possession of our little circle of three, filled our hearts with inward happiness. I still continued to derive exquisite enjoyment from the Councillor's strange crotchets and oddities; but it was of course Antonia's irresistible charms alone which attracted me, and led me to put up with a good deal which I should otherwise, in the frame of mind in which I then was, have impatiently shunned. For it only too often happened that in the Councillor's characteristic extravagance there was mingled much that was dull and tiresome: and it was in a special degree irritating

[1] This was the name of a well-known musical family from Bohemia. Karl Stamitz is the one here possibly meant, since she died about eighteen or twenty years previous to the publication of this tale.

to me that, as often as I turned the conversation upon music, and particularly upon singing, he was sure to interrupt me, with that sardonic smile upon his face and those repulsive singing tones of his, by some remark of a quite opposite tendency, very often of a commonplace character. From the great distress which at such times Antonia's glances betrayed, I perceived that he only did it to deprive me of a pretext for calling upon her for a song. But I didn't relinquish my design. The hindrances which the Councillor threw in my way only strengthened my resolution to overcome them; I *must* hear Antonia sing if I was not to pine away in reveries and dim aspirations for want of hearing her.

One evening Krespel was in an uncommonly good-humour; he had been taking an old Cremona violin to pieces, and had discovered that the sound-post was fixed half a line more obliquely than usual—an important discovery!—one of incalculable advantage in the practical work of making violins! I succeeded in setting him off at full speed on his hobby of the true art of violin-playing. Mention of the way in which the old masters picked up their dexterity in execution from really great singers (which was what Krespel happened just then to be expatiating upon) naturally paved the way for the remark that now the practice was the exact opposite of this, the vocal score erroneously following the affected and abrupt transitions and rapid scaling of the instrumentalists. "What is more nonsensical," I cried, leaping from my chair, running to the piano, and opening it quickly—"what is more nonsensical than such an execrable style as this, which, far from being music, is much more like the noise of peas rolling across the floor?" At the same time I sang several of the modern *fermatas*, which rush up and down and hum like a well-spun peg-top, striking a few villainous chords by way of accompaniment. Krespel laughed outrageously and screamed: "Ha! ha! methinks I hear our German-Italians, or our Italian-Germans struggling with an aria from Pucitta,[1] or Portogallo,[2] or some other *Maestro di capella*, or rather *schiavo d'un primo uomo*."[3] Now, thought I, now's the time; so turning to Antonia, I remarked, "Antonia knows nothing of such singing as that, I believe?" At the same time I struck up

[1] Vincenzo Pucitta (1778–1861) was an Italian opera composer, whose music "shows great facility, but no invention." He also wrote several songs.

[2] Il Portogallo was the Italian sobriquet of a Portuguese musician named Mark Anthony Simão (1763–1829). He lived alternately in Italy and Portugal, and wrote several operas.

[3] Literally, "The slave of a *primo uomo*," *primo uomo* being the masculine form corresponding to *prima donna*, that is, a singer of hero's parts in operatic music. At one time also female parts were sung and acted by men or boys.

one of old Leonardo Leo's [1] beautiful soul-stirring songs. Then Antonia's cheeks glowed; heavenly radiance sparkled in her eyes, which grew full of reawakened inspiration; she hastened to the piano; she opened her lips; but at that very moment Krespel pushed her away, grasped me by the shoulders, and with a shriek that rose up to tenor pitch, cried, "My son—my son—my son!" And then he immediately went on, singing very softly, and grasping my hand with a bow that was the pink of politeness, "In very truth, my esteemed and honourable student-friend, in very truth, it would be a violation of the codes of social intercourse, as well as of all good manners, were I to express aloud and in a stirring way my wish that here, on this very spot, the devil from hell would softly break your neck with his burning claws, and so in a sense make short work of you; but, setting that aside, you must acknowledge, my dearest friend, that it is rapidly growing dark, and there are no lamps burning to-night, so that, even though I did not kick you downstairs at once, your darling limbs might still run a risk of suffering damage. Go home by all means; and cherish a kind remembrance of your faithful friend, if it should happen that you never—pray understand me—if you should never see him in his own house again." Therewith he embraced me, and, still keeping fast hold of me, turned me slowly towards the door, so that I could not get another single look at Antonia. Of course it is plain enough that in my position I couldn't thrash the Councillor, though that is what he really deserved. The Professor enjoyed a good laugh at my expense, and assured me that I had ruined for ever all hopes of retaining the Councillor's friendship. Antonia was too dear to me, I might say too holy, for me to go and play the part of the languishing lover and stand gazing up at her window, or to fill the rôle of the love-sick adventurer. Completely upset, I went away from H——; but, as is usual in such cases, the brilliant colours of the picture of my fancy faded, and the recollection of Antonia, as well as of Antonia's singing (which I had never heard), often fell upon my heart like a soft faint trembling blight, comforting me.

Two years afterwards I received an appointment in B——, and set out on a journey to the south of Germany. The towers of H—— rose before me in the red vaporous glow of the evening; the nearer I came the more was I oppressed by an indescribable feeling of the most agonizing distress; it lay upon me like a heavy burden; I could not breathe; I was obliged to get out of my carriage into the open air. But my anguish continued to increase until it became actual physical pain. Soon I seemed to hear the strains of a solemn chorale floating in the air; the sounds continued to grow

[1] Leonardo Leo, the chief Neapolitan representative of Italian music in the first part of the eighteenth century, and author of more than forty operas and nearly one hundred compositions for the Church.

more distinct; I realised the fact that they were men's voices chanting a church chorale. "What's that? what's that?" I cried, a burning stab darting as it were through my breast. "Don't you see?" replied the coachman, who was driving along beside me, "why, don't you see? They're burying somebody up yonder in yon churchyard." And indeed we were near the churchyard; I saw a circle of men clothed in black standing round a grave, which was on the point of being closed. Tears started to my eyes; I somehow fancied they were burying there all the joy and all the happiness of life. Moving on rapidly down the hill, I was no longer able to see into the churchyard; the chorale came to an end, and I perceived not far distant from the gate some of the mourners returning from the funeral. The Professor, with his niece on his arm, both in deep mourning, went close past me without noticing me. The young lady had her handkerchief pressed close to her eyes, and was weeping bitterly. In the frame of mind in which I then was I could not possibly go into the town, so I sent on my servant with the carriage to the hotel where I usually put up, whilst I took a turn in the familiar neighbourhood to get rid of a mood that was possibly only due to physical causes, such as heating on the journey, etc. On arriving at a well-known avenue, which leads to a pleasure resort, I came upon a most extraordinary spectacle. Councillor Krespel was being conducted by two mourners, from whom he appeared to be endeavouring to make his escape by all sorts of strange twists and turns. As usual, he was dressed in his own curious home-made grey coat; but from his little cocked-hat, which he wore perched over one ear in military fashion, a long narrow ribbon of black crape fluttered backwards and forwards in the wind. Around his waist he had buckled a black sword-belt; but instead of a sword he had stuck a long fiddle-bow into it. A creepy shudder ran through my limbs: "He's insane," thought I, as I slowly followed them. The Councillor's companions led him as far as his house, where he embraced them, laughing loudly. They left him; and then his glance fell upon me, for I now stood near him. He stared at me fixedly for some time; then he cried in a hollow voice, "Welcome, my student friend! you also understand it!" Therewith he took me by the arm and pulled me into the house, up the steps, into the room where the violins hung. They were all draped in black crape; the violin of the old master was missing; in its place was a cypress wreath. I knew what had happened. "Antonia! Antonia!" I cried, in inconsolable grief. The Councillor, with his arms crossed on his breast, stood beside me, as if turned into stone. I pointed to the cypress wreath. "When she died," said he, in a very hoarse solemn voice, "when she died, the sound-post of that violin broke into pieces with a ringing crack, and the sound-board was split

from end to end. The faithful instrument could only live with her and in her; it lies beside her in the coffin, it has been buried with her." Deeply agitated, I sank down upon a chair, whilst the Councillor began to sing a gay song in a husky voice; it was truly horrible to see him hopping about on one foot, and the crape string (he still had his hat on) flying about the room and up to the violins hanging on the walls. Indeed, I could not repress a loud cry that rose to my lips when, on the Councillor making an abrupt turn, the crape came all over me; I fancied he wanted to envelop me in it and drag me down into the horrible dark depths of insanity. Suddenly he stood still and addressed me in his singing way, "My son! my son! why do you call out? Have you espied the angel of death? That always precedes the ceremony." Stepping into the middle of the room, he took the violin-bow out of his sword-belt, and, holding it over his head with both hands, broke it into a thousand pieces. Then, with a loud laugh, he cried, "Now you imagine my sentence is pronounced, don't you, my son? but it's nothing of the kind—not at all! not at all! Now I'm free—free—free—hurrah! I'm free! Now I shall make no more violins—no more violins—hurrah! no more violins!" This he sang to a horrible mirthful tune, again spinning round on one foot. Perfectly aghast, I was making the best of my way to the door, when he held me fast, saying quite calmly, "Stay, my student friend, pray don't think from this outbreak of grief, which is torturing me as if with the agonies of death, that I am insane; I only do it because a short time ago I made myself a dressing-gown in which I wanted to look like Fate or like God!" The Councillor then went on with a medley of silly and awful rubbish, until he fell down utterly exhausted; I called up the old housekeeper, and was very pleased to find myself in the open air again.

I never doubted for a moment that Krespel had become insane; the Professor, however, asserted the contrary. "There are men," he remarked, "from whom nature or a special destiny has taken away the cover behind which the mad folly of the rest of us runs its course unobserved. They are like thin-skinned insects, which, as we watch the restless play of their muscles, seem to be misshapen, while nevertheless everything soon comes back into its proper form again. All that with us remains thought passes over with Krespel into action. That bitter scorn which the spirit that is wrapped up in the doings and dealings of earth often has at hand, Krespel gives vent to in outrageous gestures and agile caprioles. But these are his lightning conductor. What comes up out of the earth he gives again to the earth, but what is divine, that he keeps; and so I believe that his inner consciousness, in spite of the apparent madness which springs from it to the surface, is as right as a trivet. To be sure, Antonia's sudden death grieves him sore, but I warrant

that to-morrow will see him going along in his old jog-trot way as usual." And the Professor's prediction was almost literally fulfilled. Next day the Councillor appeared to be just as he formerly was, only he averred that he would never make another violin, nor yet ever play on another. And, as I learned later, he kept his word.

Hints which the Professor let fall confirmed my own private conviction that the so carefully guarded secret of the Councillor's relations to Antonia, nay, that even her death, was a crime which must weigh heavily upon him, a crime that could not be atoned for. I determined that I would not leave H—— without taxing him with the offence which I conceived him to be guilty of; I determined to shake his heart down to its very roots, and so compel him to make open confession of the terrible deed. The more I reflected upon the matter, the clearer it grew in my own mind that Krespel must be a villain, and in the same proportion did my intended reproach, which assumed of itself the form of a real rhetorical masterpiece, wax more fiery and more impressive. Thus equipped and mightily incensed, I hurried to his house. I found him with a calm smiling countenance making playthings. "How can peace," I burst out—"how can peace find lodgment even for a single moment in your breast, so long as the memory of your horrible deed preys like a serpent upon you?" He gazed at me in amazement, and laid his chisel aside. "What do you mean, my dear sir?" he asked; "pray take a seat." But my indignation chafing me more and more, I went on to accuse him directly of having murdered Antonia, and to threaten him with the vengeance of the Eternal.

Further, as a newly full-fledged lawyer, full of my profession, I went so far as to give him to understand that I would leave no stone unturned to get a clue to the business, and so deliver him here in this world into the hands of an earthly judge. I must confess that I was considerably disconcerted when, at the conclusion of my violent and pompous harangue, the Councillor, without answering so much as a single word, calmly fixed his eyes upon me as though expecting me to go on again. And this I did indeed attempt to do, but it sounded so ill-founded and so stupid as well that I soon grew silent again. Krespel gloated over my embarrassment, whilst a malicious ironical smile flitted across his face. Then he grew very grave, and addressed me in solemn tones. "Young man, no doubt you think I am foolish, insane; that I can pardon you, since we are both confined in the same mad-house; and you only blame me for deluding myself with the idea that I am God the Father because you imagine yourself to be God the Son. But how do you dare desire to insinuate yourself into the secrets and lay bare the hidden motives of a life that is strange to you and that must con-

tinue so? She has gone and the mystery is solved." He ceased speaking, rose, and traversed the room backwards and forwards several times. I ventured to ask for an explanation; he fixed his eyes upon me, grasped me by the hand, and led me to the window, which he threw wide open. Propping himself upon his arms, he leaned out, and, looking down into the garden, told me the history of his life. When he finished I left him, touched and ashamed.

In a few words, his relations with Antonia rose in the following way. Twenty years before, the Councillor had been led into Italy by his favourite engrossing passion of hunting up and buying the best violins of the old masters. At that time he had not yet begun to make them himself, and so of course he had not begun to take to pieces those which he bought. In Venice he heard the celebrated singer, Angela ——i, who at that time was playing with splendid success as *prima donna* at St. Benedict's Theatre. His enthusiasm was awakened, not only in her art—which Signora Angela had indeed brought to a high pitch of perfection—but in her angelic beauty as well. He sought her acquaintance; and in spite of all his rugged manners he succeeded in winning her heart, principally through his bold and yet at the same time masterly violin-playing. Close intimacy led in a few weeks to marriage, which, however, was kept a secret, because Angela was unwilling to sever her connection with the theatre, neither did she wish to part with her professional name, that by which she was celebrated, nor to add to it the cacophonous "Krespel." With the most extravagant irony he described to me what a strange life of worry and torture Angela led him as soon as she became his wife. Krespel was of opinion that more capriciousness and waywardness were concentrated in Angela's little person than in all the rest of the *prima donnas* in the world put together. If he now and again presumed to stand up in his own defence, she let loose a whole army of abbots, musical composers, and students upon him, who, ignorant of his true connection with Angela, soundly rated him as a most intolerable, ungallant lover for not submitting to all the Signora's caprices. It was just after one of these stormy scenes that Krespel fled to Angela's country-seat to try and forget in playing fantasies on his Cremona violin the annoyances of the day. But he had not been there long before the Signora, who had followed hard after him, stepped into the room. She was in an affectionate humour; she embraced her husband, overwhelmed him with sweet and languishing glances, and rested her pretty head on his shoulder. But Krespel, carried away into the world of music, continued to play on until the walls echoed again; thus he chanced to touch the Signora somewhat ungently with his arm and the fiddle-bow. She leapt back full of fury, shrieking that he was a "German brute," snatched the violin from his hands, and dashed it on the marble table into a thousand pieces.

Krespel stood like a statue of stone before her; but then, as if awakening out of a dream, he seized her with the strength of a giant and threw her out of the window of her own house, and, without troubling himself about anything more, fled back to Venice —to Germany. It was not, however, until some time had elapsed that he had a clear recollection of what he had done; although he knew that the window was scarcely five feet from the ground, and although he was fully cognisant of the necessity, under the above-mentioned circumstances, of throwing the Signora out of the window, he yet felt troubled by a sense of painful uneasiness, and the more so since she had imparted to him in no ambiguous terms an interesting secret as to her condition. He hardly dared to make inquiries; and he was not a little surprised about eight months afterwards at receiving a tender letter from his beloved wife, in which she made not the slightest allusion to what had taken place in her country-house, only adding to the intelligence that she had been safely delivered of a sweet little daughter the heartfelt prayer that her dear husband and now a happy father would come at once to Venice. That, however, Krespel did not do; rather he appealed to a confidential friend for a more circumstantial account of the details, and learned that the Signora had alighted upon the soft grass as lightly as a bird, and that the sole consequences of the fall or shock had been psychic. That is to say, after Krespel's heroic deed she had become completely altered; she never showed a trace of caprice, of her former freaks, or of her teasing habits; and the composer who wrote for the next carnival was the happiest fellow under the sun, since the Signora was willing to sing his music without the scores and hundreds of changes which she at other times had insisted upon. " To be sure," added his friend, " there was every reason for preserving the secret of Angela's cure, else every day would see lady singers flying through windows." The Councillor was not a little excited at this news; he engaged horses; he took his seat in the carriage. " Stop! " he cried suddenly. " Why, there's not a shadow of doubt," he murmured to himself, " that as soon as Angela sets eyes upon me again, the evil spirit will recover his power and once more take possession of her. And since I have already thrown her out of the window, what could I do if a similar case were to occur again? What would there be left for me to do? " He got out of the carriage, and wrote an affectionate letter to his wife, making graceful allusion to her tenderness in especially dwelling upon the fact that his tiny daughter had, like him, a little mole behind the ear, and—remained in Germany. Now ensued an active correspondence between them. Assurances of unchanged affection—invitations—laments over the absence of the beloved one—thwarted wishes—hopes, etc.—flew backwards and forwards from Venice to H——, from H—— to Venice. At length

Angela came to Germany, and, as is well known, sang with brilliant success as *prima donna* at the great theatre in F——. Despite the fact that she was no longer young, she won all hearts by the irresistible charm of her wonderfully splendid singing. At that time she had not lost her voice in the least degree. Meanwhile, Antonia had been growing up; and her mother never tired of writing to tell her father how that a singer of the first rank was developing in her. Krespel's friends in F—— also confirmed this intelligence, and urged him to come for once to F—— to see and admire this uncommon sight of two such glorious singers. They had not the slightest suspicion of the close relations in which Krespel stood to the pair. Willingly would he have seen with his own eyes the daughter who occupied so large a place in his heart, and who moreover often appeared to him in his dreams; but as often as he thought upon his wife he felt very uncomfortable, and so he remained at home amongst his broken violins.

There was a certain promising young composer, B—— of F——, who was found to have suddenly disappeared, nobody knew where. This young man fell so deeply in love with Antonia that, as she returned his love, he earnestly besought her mother to consent to an immediate union, sanctified as it would further be by art. Angela had nothing to urge against his suit; and the Councillor the more readily gave his consent that the young composer's productions had found favour before his rigorous critical judgment. Krespel was expecting to hear of the consummation of the marriage, when he received instead a black-sealed envelope addressed in a strange hand. Doctor R—— conveyed to the Councillor the sad intelligence that Angela had fallen seriously ill in consequence of a cold caught at the theatre, and that during the night immediately preceding what was to have been Antonia's wedding-day, she had died. To him, the Doctor, Angela had disclosed the fact that she was Krespel's wife, and that Antonia was his daughter; he, Krespel, had better hasten therefore to take charge of the orphan. Notwithstanding that the Councillor was a good deal upset by this news of Angela's death, he soon began to feel that an antipathetic, disturbing influence had departed out of his life, and that now for the first time he could begin to breathe freely. The very same day he set out for F——. You could not credit how heartrending was the Councillor's description of the moment when he first saw Antonia. Even in the fantastic oddities of his expression there was such a marvellous power of description that I am unable to give even so much as a faint indication of it. Antonia inherited all her mother's amiability and all her mother's charms, but not the repellent reverse of the medal. There was no chronic moral ulcer, which might break out from time to time. Antonia's betrothed put in an appearance, whilst Antonia herself, fathoming with happy instinct

the deeper-lying character of her wonderful father, sang one of old Padre Martini's[1] motets, which, she knew, Krespel in the heyday of his courtship had never grown tired of hearing her mother sing. The tears ran in streams down Krespel's cheeks; even Angela he had never heard sing like that. Antonia's voice was of a very remarkable and altogether peculiar timbre: at one time it was like the sighing of an Æolian harp, at another like the warbled gush of the nightingale. It seemed as if there was not room for such notes in the human breast. Antonia, blushing with joy and happiness, sang on and on—all her most beautiful songs, B—— playing between whiles as only enthusiasm that is intoxicated with delight can play. Krespel was at first transported with rapture, then he grew thoughtful—still—absorbed in reflection. At length he leapt to his feet, pressed Antonia to his heart, and begged her in a low husky voice, " Sing no more if you love me—my heart is bursting —I fear—I fear—don't sing again."

" No! " remarked the Councillor next day to Doctor R——, " when, as she sang, her blushes gathered into two dark red spots on her pale cheeks, I knew it had nothing to do with your nonsensical family likenesses, I knew it was what I dreaded." The Doctor, whose countenance had shown signs of deep distress from the very beginning of the conversation, replied, " Whether it arises from a too early taxing of her powers of song, or whether the fault is Nature's—enough, Antonia labours under an organic failure in the chest, while it is from it, too, that her voice derives its wonderful power and its singular timbre, which I might almost say transcend the limits of human capabilities of song. But it bears the announcement of her early death; for, if she continues to sing, I wouldn't give her at the most more than six months longer to live." Krespel's heart was lacerated as if by the stabs of hundreds of stinging knives. It was as though his life had been for the first time overshadowed by a beautiful tree full of the most magnificent blossoms, and now it was to be sawn to pieces at the roots, so that it could not grow green and blossom any more. His resolution was taken. He told Antonia all; he put the alternatives before her—whether she would follow her betrothed and yield to his and the world's seductions, but with the certainty of dying early, or whether she would spread round her father in his old days that joy and peace which had hitherto been unknown to him, and so secure a long life. She threw herself sobbing into his arms, and he, knowing the heartrending trial that was before her, did not press for a

[1] Giambattista Martini, more commonly called Padre Martini, of Bologna, formed an influential school of music there in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He wrote vocal and instrumental pieces for both the church and the theatre. He was also a learned historian of music. He has the merit of having discerned and encouraged the genius of Mozart when, a boy of fourteen, he visited Bologna in 1770.

more explicit declaration. He talked the matter over with her betrothed; but, notwithstanding that the latter averred that no note should ever cross Antonia's lips, the Councillor was only too well aware that even B—— could not resist the temptation of hearing her sing, at any rate arias of his own composition. And the world, the musical public, even though acquainted with the nature of the singer's affliction, would certainly not relinquish its claims to hear her, for in cases where pleasure is concerned people of this class are very selfish and cruel. The Councillor disappeared from F—— along with Antonia, and came to H——. B—— was in despair when he learned that they had gone. He set out on their track, overtook them, and arrived at H—— at the same time that they did. "Let me see him only once, and then die!" entreated Antonia. "Die! die!" cried Krespel, wild with anger, an icy shudder running through him. His daughter, the only creature in the wide world who had awakened in him the springs of unknown joy, who alone had reconciled him to life, tore herself away from his heart, and he—he suffered the terrible trial to take place. B—— sat down to the piano; Antonia sang; Krespel fiddled away merrily, until the two red spots showed themselves on Antonia's cheeks. Then he bade her stop; and as B—— was taking leave of his betrothed, she suddenly fell to the floor with a loud scream. "I thought," continued Krespel in his narration, "I thought that she was, as I had anticipated, really dead; but as I had prepared myself for the worst, my calmness did not leave me, nor my self-command desert me. I grasped B——, who stood like a silly sheep in dismay, by the shoulders, and said (here the Councillor fell into his singing tone), 'Now that you, my estimable pianoforte-player, have, as you wished and desired, really murdered your betrothed, you may quietly take your departure; at least have the goodness to make yourself scarce before I run my bright hanger through your heart. My daughter, who, as you see, is rather pale, could very well do with some colour from your precious blood. Make haste and run, for I might also hurl a nimble knife or two after you.' I must, I suppose, have looked rather formidable as I uttered these words, for, with a cry of the greatest terror, B—— tore himself loose from my grasp, rushed out of the room, and down the steps." Directly after B—— was gone, when the Councillor tried to lift up his daughter, who lay unconscious on the floor, she opened her eyes with a deep sigh, but soon closed them again as if about to die. Then Krespel's grief found vent aloud, and would not be comforted. The doctor, whom the old housekeeper had called in, pronounced Antonia's case a somewhat serious but by no means dangerous attack; and she did indeed recover more quickly than her father had dared to hope. She now clung to him with the most confiding childlike affection; she entered into his

favourite hobbies—into his mad schemes and whims. She helped him take old violins to pieces and glue new ones together. "I won't sing again any more, but live for you," she often said, sweetly smiling upon him, after she had been asked to sing and had refused. Such appeals, however, the Councillor was anxious to spare her as much as possible; therefore it was that he was unwilling to take her into society, and solicitously shunned all music. He well understood how painful it must be for her to forgo altogether the exercise of that art which she had brought to such a pitch of perfection. When the Councillor bought the wonderful violin that he had buried with Antonia, and was about to take it to pieces, she met him with such sadness in her face and softly breathed the petition, "What! this as well?" By some power, which he could not explain, he felt impelled to leave this particular instrument unbroken, and to play upon it. Scarcely had he drawn the first few notes from it than Antonia cried aloud with joy, "Why, that's me!—now I shall sing again." And, in truth, there was something remarkably striking about the clear, silvery, bell-like tones of the violin; they seemed to have been engendered in the human soul. Krespel's heart was deeply moved; he played, too, better than ever. As he ran up and down the scale, playing bold passages with consummate power and expression, she clapped her hands together and cried with delight, "I did that well! I did that well!"

From this time onwards her life was filled with peace and cheerfulness. She often said to the Councillor, "I should like to sing something, father." Then Krespel would take his violin down from the wall and play her most beautiful songs, and her heart was right glad and happy. Shortly before my arrival in H—— the Councillor fancied one night that he heard somebody playing the piano in the adjoining room, and he soon made out distinctly that B—— was flourishing on the instrument in his usual style. He wished to get up, but felt himself held down as if by a dead weight, and lying as if fettered in iron bonds; he was utterly unable to move an inch. Then Antonia's voice was heard singing low and soft; soon, however, it began to rise and rise in volume until it became an ear-splitting *fortissimo*; and at length she passed over into a powerfully impressive song which B—— had once composed for her in the devotional style of the old masters. Krespel described his condition as being incomprehensible, for terrible anguish was mingled with a delight he had never experienced before. All at once he was surrounded by a dazzling brightness, in which he beheld B—— and Antonia locked in a close embrace, and gazing at each other in a rapture of ecstasy. The music of the song and of the pianoforte accompanying it went on without any visible signs that Antonia sang or that B—— touched the instrument.

Then the Councillor fell into a sort of dead faint, whilst the images vanished away. On awakening he still felt the terrible anguish of his dream. He rushed into Antonia's room. She lay on the sofa, her eyes closed, a sweet angelic smile on her face, her hands devoutly folded, and looking as if asleep and dreaming of the joys and raptures of heaven. But she was—dead.

DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ

1777–1843

THE FIELD OF TERROR

It happened that some little time before the Peace of Westphalia there assembled at the foot of the Riesenberg, in a beautiful part of the country of Silesia, a number of persons who were the relations, and had lately succeeded to the property, of an opulent, deceased farmer. This man had died without children, and had left several farms and fields scattered about that fertile country, and his heirs were now met together to divide the inheritance.

For this purpose they had assembled in a barn in one of the principal villages, and they found no difficulty among themselves as to the allotment of every part of the estate, except with regard to a particular field which was known by the name of the Haunted Field, in consequence of the wonderful stories that were told respecting it.

This field was now entirely overgrown with wild flowers and weeds, which nevertheless from their strong growth betokened at the same time the excellent nature of the land, and its desolate and neglected condition. For many years had now passed since it had been disturbed by the ploughshare, or received the seed from the hands of the industrious husbandman; as it was related that no sooner had the ploughman at any time entered within its bounds than the oxen became frantic under the yoke, and ran off in affright, and that the ploughman and the seedsman, struck with the like panic, would fly in dismay, affirming that some supernatural beings, under pretence of assisting them in their labours, approached them with such hideous aspects that no one could look on them and keep their senses.

The question now arose to whom this Haunted Field should be allotted. Every one felt an insurmountable objection to it himself, but thought his neighbour might perhaps manage it, and, as is the way of the world, was desirous of shifting the burden off his own shoulders. They could, however, come to no agreement, and it was now late in the evening and time to depart when one of them proposed an expedient which he hoped would satisfy all parties.

"We are bound," he said, "agreeably to the testator's will, to bestow a legacy on his poor cousin who dwells in this village. The

maiden is, to be sure, only very distantly related to the departed, yet she is virtuous and frugal, and well deserving of a good husband, and goes by the name of ' the pretty Sabine.' Now I propose that we present this maiden with the Haunted Field, and we shall in that way discharge the wishes of our lamented relation, and it may perhaps prove a rich dowry to her if she can find a husband that will venture to cultivate it."

They were all delighted at this proposal, and immediately dispatched one of their number to communicate to the cousin the intelligence of their bounty.

It was about the same time in the evening that Sabine heard, in the twilight, a gentle tap at her cottage window, and on asking who knocked, was answered by a voice, at the first sound of which the rustic bolt was drawn back and the little window thrown open. It was the brave young Frederick whom she had been long expecting, and who, being born as poor as herself, had for the last ten years devoted himself to the wars in order to win some little subsistence to compass his marriage with the pretty Sabine, whose kind heart was all his own.

It was a delightful picture to see Sabine leaning out of her wired lattice with tears of joy starting in her beautiful eyes, and the brave young Frederick looking up to her and proffering her his faith.

" Ah! Frederick," she said, " God be praised, thou art returned safe; this has been my constant prayer morn and evening; and tell me, Frederick, have you made your fortune in the campaign? "

" Fortunes are not so soon won," said Frederick, shaking his head and smiling, " and prizes do not fall to every one. However, I am better off than when I departed, and if you have a bold heart I think you may venture to marry."

" Ah! " sighed Sabine, " thou kind-hearted Frederick, to take a poor naked orphan for better or worse."

" Nay," said Frederick, " give me but one friendly yes, and promise to be mine, and I will warrant we shall thrive and live like princes."

" And hast thou got thy discharge and art no longer a soldier? "

Frederick, looking into the knapsack that held his treasures, brought out a silver medal, which he reached to Sabine, and as she received it, the light of the little lamp in her chamber fell on the piece. There was a burst drum figured in an old-fashioned manner, and over it was written the words—" God be praised, the war is ended."

" Perhaps," added Frederick, helping her to decipher the medal; " in truth it is not yet peace, but we shall have no more fighting at present, and our colonel has discharged his men."

At this intelligence Sabine held out her hand as a pledge of her affection to her lover, and invited her betrothed to come into her

little chamber, where he seated himself down by her side and related how he had won his gold and silver in honourable battle, and in the open field, from a foreign officer of rank whom he had made prisoner, and obtained the money as his ransom. After an approving smile conferred on her brave soldier, the industrious maiden took up her spindle, rejoicing that there was no ill-gotten gain belonging to either of them.

Just at this moment the cousin arrived to communicate the message entrusted to him. Sabine, with maidenly blushes, presented to him the stranger as her intended husband, and the cousin added:

"This is well! I am arrived just in time, for if your betrothed has not brought back a fortune from the wars, this will be a welcome gift, which I am directed to present to you in the name of your relations, as it was the will of the testator that you should be remembered in some way or other."

Frederick was too much offended at the boasting manner in which this communication was made to testify any joy on the occasion. But Sabine, in a humble manner, thanked God for His gracious dispensation, and ignorant of the evil motives of mankind, she, with a joyful heart, bowed her head in token of her great satisfaction.

But when she heard that the Haunted Field was assigned to her as her portion, and in satisfaction of her just claims, the sordid behaviour of her relations struck her to the soul, and she could not restrain her tears at the grievous disappointment.

The cousin, with a malicious smile, said he was grieved to find she thought herself wronged, as it was in fact a much larger share of the inheritance than really of right belonged to her. And, thus speaking, he was taking his departure, but Frederick interrupted him, and addressing him in a cool and deliberate manner:

"Sir," said he, "I see you are disposed to make a jest of this matter, and that you have all conspired together not to give my young bride a single farthing. But we will accept your present in God's name, in the hope that, in the hands of a brave and active soldier, the Haunted Field may be a better bargain than a parcel of covetous, envious old relations wish it to be."

The cousin, abashed at the presence of the bold young man, returned no answer, and made the best of his way back. The bridegroom then kissed the tears from the eyes of his young bride,[1] and hastened away to the priest to arrange matters for the marriage.

After the lapse of a few weeks Frederick and Sabine became man and wife, and commenced their slender housekeeping. The young man had expended the greater part of his gold and silver pieces in the purchase of a yoke of fine oxen, and in the buying of seed

[1] In Germany the appellations of Bride and Bridegroom are attached to the respective parties on their betrothal.

and implements requisite for his husbandry, reserving no more than sufficient to support himself and his wife in the most frugal manner until they should be enriched by the next year's harvest.

As Frederick with his oxen and plough now took his departure for the field, he looked back and smiled at his good Sabine, saying that he was now about to lay out his gold, and that next year he should have it all back, and to spare. Sabine looked anxiously after him, wishing in her own heart that he might return home in safety.

And home truly he came, and that, too, before the ringing of the curfew, but by no means so full of cheer as when he set out joyfully singing in the morning. He was himself dragging along the plough, which was battered and broken, and was at the same time leading one of his oxen lame and wounded along with him, and himself bleeding on the shoulders and head. Still, his soldier-like courage did not fail him, and calling on his wife with a cheerful countenance:

"Prepare for salting," he said, "for this goblin in the Haunted Field has provided us with an abundance of beef. This ox that I have brought back with me has run mad, and injured himself so much that he will not be fit for any further work. The other ran off to the mountain, and there I saw him plunge from a steep rock into the river below, where I fancy he now lies at the bottom."

"Oh! these cousins, these wicked cousins!" cried Sabine, weeping, "already has their accursed present robbed thee of thy hard-earned gold, and, what is more, thou art thyself hurt and bleeding, my brave young soldier!"

"My hurt is of no consequence," said Frederick, "it was but the oxen that crushed me between them when they ran mad, and I endeavoured to stop them: but it matters not grieving, and in the morning I will start afresh."

Sabine was now so terrified at what had happened that she endeavoured to dissuade her husband from any further attempt at cultivating the unlucky field. But he declared in reply that the field should have no rest as long as he lived, and "land that one cannot plough one must delve," said he, "and I think this goblin will not frighten a good steady soldier in the way he does a poor brute animal."

He then slaughtered the wounded beast and cut him up, and the next morning, as soon as Sabine was ready to begin salting the meat, Frederick was again on his way to the Haunted Field, and departed with his pickaxe and his spade, with as good a heart as on the morning before he had set out with his good yoke of oxen and his new shining plough.

He returned from his work in the evening as on the previous day. He looked pale and wearied, but was in good spirits.

" This is rather hard work," said he, laughing, " for there comes a lubberly goblin, first on this side, then on that, bantering me with his foolish talk and tricks; but he seemed to wonder at last that I took no heed of him, and from that I begin to get fresh courage. Besides, what has an industrious man to fear that goes straight forward and minds his work? "

Many days now passed away in the same manner. The brave Frederick continued unwearied, delving and sowing and destroying the weeds. And he had now cultivated a good portion of the Haunted Field by the aid of his spade alone, for he never relaxed in his exertions, and his land began to promise a crop, if not very rich, still a handsome return for his trouble; and he now cut his corn and carried it all home himself, for his land was yet too poor to afford him reapers to help him, and he would not let Sabine venture into the field, more particularly as he was expecting her soon to present him with an infant. The child was born, and in three years two more came, and so life went on without any remarkable occurrence.

By hard striving and industry he compelled the Haunted Field to yield him one crop after another, and thus, like an honest man, redeemed his word to Sabine, that he would find sufficient to support her.

It happened one evening at harvest time that Frederick had remained at work until near dark, when all at once he perceived at his side a strongly-built, swarthy-looking man like a collier, with a huge furnace-iron in his hand, who said to Frederick:

" What! are there no oxen left in the land that thou workest with thine own hands? Thou shouldst be a rich farmer if one may judge from the extent of thy land."

Frederick well knew who it was that thus addressed him, and did as people are accustomed to do on these occasions, that is, held his tongue and worked even the harder, and tried to turn his thoughts another way.

But the goblin did not on this occasion disappear as these beings commonly do when they are thus treated, in order to appear afterwards in a more hideous form, but again addressed Frederick, and said in a friendly tone:

" Friend, thou wrongest both me and thyself. Answer me truly and sincerely; perhaps I may find a cure for thy misfortunes."

" Well, then, in God's name speak," said Frederick, " and if there be mischief in thy words the blame be with thee."

Frederick then rose from his work and related in a true manner to the collier all that had happened since he took possession of the field, nor did he conceal his hatred to the goblin, and how difficult it was, owing to his persecution, to work out a subsistence with his bare pickaxe and spade, and support his family.

The collier heard all with a serious countenance. He then stood still for some time in a musing attitude, and at last spoke as follows:

"It seems, friend, that thou knowest who I am, and that is commendable in thee, that thou hast not sacrificed the truth but spoken boldly out, notwithstanding thou hast so much cause to be angry with me; and to confess the truth thou hast indeed had too much reason. But now, since I find thee a right honest churl, I will make thee an offer that will recompense thee for all that is past. Thou must know, then, that when I have had my fill of sport in woods and mountains, I have a fancy to dwell in a comfortable house, and live a sober and orderly life for some half-year or so. How, now, if thou wert to engage me as thy servant for the next six months?"

"Now that is ill done," said Frederick, "to banter an honest man in this way."

"No! no!" said the other, "it is no bantering—I am really serious; thou shalt find me a truly hard-working drudge, and as long as I serve thee, no hobgoblin will venture to be seen in the Haunted Field, so that thou mayest work thy oxen there without interruption."

"That I should like well," said Frederick, after some thought, "if I only knew whether thou wouldst keep thy word, and moreover if it is right to deal with thee."

"That you must settle yourself," said the stranger, "but my word will never be broken as long as the Riesenberg stands; and, moreover, I am not a malicious-minded spirit—somewhat sportive, and tricksy, and wild, but that is all."

"Why, then," said Frederick, "thou must needs be the famous Rubezahl!"

"When thou thinkest so," said the collier, interrupting him, "learn that that powerful spirit will not allow of a name so ignominious, but calls himself the Monarch of the Hills."

"That would be a droll affair," said Frederick, laughing, "to have the King of the Hills for my serving-man."

"Thou mayest call me Waldmann, then," answered the other.

Frederick now stood considering for a considerable time, and at last said, "Well! so be it—I don't think I do wrong in engaging thee; I have often observed that people employ irrational animals to turn the spit and do other household offices; why not a goblin?"

The collier uttered a hearty laugh, and said, "Now such an offer was never made by any of my kind before. But that I heed not—'tis my humour, and so 'tis a bargain, my honoured master!"

Frederick, however, made it a condition that his new servant should on no account whatever discover to Sabine or the children that he had lived in the Haunted Field, or in the old caverns of the Riesenberg; nor at any time play any goblin tricks about the

house or farm. Waldmann pledged his word to all this, so the matter was concluded, and home they both went together in a friendly mood.

Sabine was not a little surprised at this addition to their household, and could scarcely look upon the swarthy gigantic servant without fear. The children were at first so much alarmed that they would not venture out of doors when he was at work in the garden or in the croft; but his quiet and good-natured and friendly behaviour soon reconciled all the household; and if he now and then had a frolicsome fit, and chased the dog and the fowls, they thought it only sportiveness and good-humour, and a single word from the master was sufficient to bring him back into his usual bounds.

Frederick, now relying on the promise of the spirit of the mountain, inconsiderately expended his long-treasured gold in the purchase of two fine new oxen, and again went joyfully forth to his field with his plough newly repaired. Sabine looked after him anxiously, and anxiously awaited his return at night, fearing that he might again have all his prospects blighted, and be worse hurt himself than on the former occasion. But with the curfew, home came Frederick, singing through the village, driving before him his yoke of fine oxen, and kissed in great glee his wife and children, and shook his servant kindly by the hand.

Waldmann also often took out the oxen to plough, while Frederick laboured in the garden or in the barn. The greater part of the Haunted Field was now cultivated, and everything went on prosperously, to the surprise of all the inhabitants of the village, and to the chagrin of the envious relations.

The harvest was now finished, and winter approaching, when Frederick went one day with his team to gather wood for the hearth and the oven. It so happened, too, that Sabine was at the same time called away to see a poor widow in the neighbourhood who lay ill of a fever, and whom she was accustomed to befriend to the best of her means. She knew not well what to do with her children, but Waldmann desired her to leave them in his care, and as she knew that they were always amused with his tales she did so, and departed on her pious errand.

In about an hour's time from this, Frederick returned home from the forest. He placed his waggon in the shed, and put his oxen in their stalls, and was cheerfully turning his steps to the house to warm his benumbed limbs at the fire, when the piercing cries of his children suddenly alarmed his ears. He rushed into the house, burst open the kitchen door, and there found all the children shrieking, and pushed together behind the oven, and Waldmann madly laughing and leaping about, making hideous faces, and his hair all in fire and flames.

" What's to be done here? " said the master in an angry tone.

The fire was instantly extinguished on Waldmann's head, and he stood in a humble posture before his master, excusing himself by saying that he was only amusing the children. But the children ran crying to their father, and told him that he had terrified them with frightful faces, and ran to them now with a ram's head and now a dog's. "'Tis enough," said Frederick to him, "depart, friend—we dwell no longer under the same roof."

And he therewith took him by the arm, and pushed him out of the house and beyond the garden, telling the children to remain quiet in the chamber and not terrify themselves any more, as their father was now come and they were as safe as in Abraham's bosom.

The strange servant made no resistance, but as he now stood beside Frederick on the wintry ground he said laughing, "Hear! master! suppose we strike a fresh bargain. I have, I confess, made a great disturbance, but it shall not happen again; I fell unfortunately into a fit of my old humour."

"For your own pleasure," said Frederick, "but you might have terrified my children out of their senses. There is an end of our contract."

"My half-year is not yet expired," said Waldmann, arguing, "and I insist on going back to the house."

"Thou shalt not again touch my threshold," said Frederick; "thou hast broken the contract by playing thy accursed pranks; but I will pay thee thy full wages—there they are—take them and depart."

"My full wages," said the goblin with a contemptuous laugh, "hast thou then forgotten my treasures in the mountains?"

"'Tis more on my account than thine," said Frederick; "I don't wish to remain in any one's debt." And with that he forced the money into Waldmann's pocket.

"And what will become of the Haunted Field?" said Waldmann, with an angry look.

"What God wills," said Frederick. "I would rather lose fifty fields than that you should injure one hair of my children's heads. Away with thee, or I shall serve thee in a manner thou wilt not like."

"Softly," said the goblin; "when spirits such as I assume a man's form it is generally a strong one, and thou mightest perhaps come the worst off in such a contest, and then God be merciful to thee!"

"That He has ever been, and has given me a good strength of arm as thou shalt find. Back to thy mountains, thou odious brute —I warn thee for the last time."

On this the goblin attacked Frederick in a furious manner, and an obstinate contest ensued. They wrestled and threw each other without the victory being decided for the one or the other, until at

last Frederick by a masterly stroke brought his opponent to the ground, and kneeling on his breast he began to beat him with his fists, exclaiming, " I'll teach thee how to attack thy master, thou accursed mountain spirit! "

Rubezahl, however, laughed so heartily at this, that Frederick, thinking that he was mocking him, repeated his blows with renewed vigour, until the goblin at last cried out, " Enough, enough! I was not laughing at thee, but at myself, and cry mercy! "

" That's another matter," said Frederick; " rise then." And he helped him up on his legs.

" I have had a sufficient trial of human life," said the spirit, laughing; " none of my kind, I think, ever carried the sport so far. But hark! friend, thou must nevertheless allow I made a brave resistance; for thou knowest I could easily have called a host of mountain spirits to my aid had I so pleased. Truly I am almost killed with laughing."

Frederick stood regarding the merry Rubezahl, and said, " You will, I fancy, bear me a grudge, and send me ill-luck not only in the Haunted Field, but in other matters; but still I cannot repent of what I have done. I have only exercised my just authority and protected my children. Were it to happen again I should treat thee in the same way."

" No, no," said Rubezahl, " do not give yourself that trouble—I have had enough for this time. But listen to my words—go on working thy Haunted Field, and I promise thee not the shadow of a goblin shall henceforth be seen in it as long as the Riesenberg stands, and so farewell and prosper, my honest strong-fisted master."

And on this, with a familiar nod, he disappeared, and Frederick, during the remainder of his life, never saw him again. But Rubezahl kept his word to the full and more.

An unheard-of prosperity began to manifest itself in all the affairs of Frederick, and he became in a short time the richest farmer in the village. And when the children played in the Haunted Field, which both they and Sabine now walked in without fear, they would often relate how the good Waldmann had appeared to them and told them humorous tales, and how they found choice confectionaries, or beautiful carved toys, or golden ducats in their pockets on their return home.

BROTHERS GRIMM

JAKOB 1785–1863. WILHELM 1786–1859

TOM THUMB

THERE was once a poor woodman sitting by the fire in his cottage, and his wife sat by his side spinning.

" How lonely it is," said he, " for you and me to sit here by ourselves without any children to play about and amuse us, while other people seem so happy and merry with their children! "

" What you say is very true," said his wife, sighing and turning round her wheel; " how happy should I be if I had but one child! and if it were ever so small, nay, if it were no bigger than my thumb, I should be very happy, and love it dearly."

Now it came to pass that this good woman's wish was fulfilled just as she desired; for some time afterwards, she had a little boy who was quite healthy and strong, but not much bigger than my thumb.

So they said, " Well, we cannot say we have not got what we wished for, and, little as he is, we will love him dearly "; and they called him Tom Thumb.

They gave him plenty of food, yet he never grew bigger, but remained just the same size as when he was born; still his eyes were sharp and sparkling, and he soon showed himself to be a clever little fellow, who always knew well what he was about.

One day, as the woodman was getting ready to go into the wood to cut fuel, he said, " I wish I had some one to bring the cart after me, for I want to make haste."

" O father! " cried Tom, " I will take care of that; the cart shall be in the wood by the time you want it."

Then the woodman laughed and said, " How can that be? You cannot reach up to the horse's bridle."

" Never mind that, father," said Tom; " if my mother will only harness the horse, I will get into his ear, and tell him which way to go."

When the time came, the mother harnessed the horse to the cart and put Tom into his ear; and as he sat there, the little man told the beast how to go, crying out, " Go on! " and " Stop! " as he wanted; so the horse went on just as if the woodman had driven it

himself into the wood. It happened that, as the horse was going a little too fast, and Tom was calling out, " Gently! gently! " two strangers came up.

" What an odd thing that is! " said one; " there is a cart going along, and I hear a carter talking to the horse, but can see no one."

" That is strange," said the other; " let us follow the cart and see where it goes."

So they went on into the wood, till at last they came to the place where the woodman was.

Then Tom Thumb, seeing his father, cried out, " See, father, here I am with the cart, all right and safe; now take me down."

So his father took hold of the horse with one hand, and with the other took his son out of the ear; then he put him down upon a straw, where he sat as merry as you please.

The two strangers were all this time looking on, and did not know what to say for wonder. At last one took the other aside and said, " That little urchin will make our fortune if we can get him, and carry him about from town to town as a show: we must buy him."

So they went to the woodman and asked him what he would take for the little man: " He will be better off," said they, " with us than with you."

" I won't sell him at all," said the father; " my own flesh and blood is dearer to me than all the silver and gold in the world."

But Tom, hearing of the bargain they wished to make, crept up his father's coat to his shoulder, and whispered in his ear, " Take the money, father, and let them have me; I'll soon come back to you."

So the woodman at last agreed to sell Tom to the strangers for a large piece of gold.

" Where do you like to sit? " said one of them.

" Oh, put me on the rim of your hat, that will be a nice gallery for me; I can walk about there, and see the country as we go along."

So they did as he wished; and when Tom had taken leave of his father, they took him away with them. They journeyed on till it began to be dusky, and then the little man said, " Let me get down, I'm tired."

So the man took off his hat and set him down on a clod of earth in a ploughed field by the side of the road. But Tom ran about amongst the furrows, and at last slipped into an old mouse-hole.

" Good-night, masters," said he, " I'm off! Mind and look sharp after me the next time."

They ran directly to the place, and poked the ends of their sticks into the mouse-hole, but all in vain. Tom only crawled farther and farther in, and at last it became quite dark, so that they were obliged to go their way without their prize, as sulky as you please.

When Tom found they were gone, he came out of his hiding-place. " What dangerous walking it is," said he, " in this ploughed field! If I were to fall from one of these great clods, I should certainly break my neck."

At last, by good luck, he found a large empty snail-shell. " This is lucky," said he, " I can sleep here very well," and in he crept.

Just as he was falling asleep he heard two men passing, and one said to the other, " How shall we manage to steal that rich parson's silver and gold? "

" I'll tell you," cried Tom.

" What noise was that? " said the thief, frightened. " I am sure I heard some one speak."

They stood still listening, and Tom said, " Take me with you, and I'll soon show you how to get the parson's money."

" But where are you? " said they.

" Look about on the ground," answered he, " and listen where the sound comes from."

At last the thieves found him out, and lifted him in their hands. " You little urchin! " said they, " what can you do for us? "

" Why, I can get between the iron window-bars of the parson's house and throw out whatever you want."

" That's a good thought," said the thieves; " come along, we shall see what you can do."

When they came to the parson's house, Tom slipped through the window-bars into the room, and then called out as loud as he could bawl, " Will you have all that is here? "

At this the thieves were frightened, and said, " Softly, softly! Speak low, that you may not awaken anybody."

But Tom pretended not to understand them, and bawled out again, " How much will you have? Shall I throw it all out? "

Now the cook lay in the next room, and hearing a noise she raised herself in her bed and listened. Meantime the thieves were frightened, and ran off to a little distance; but at last they plucked up courage and said, " The little urchin is only trying to make a fool of us."

So they came back and whispered softly to him, saying, " Now let us have no more of your jokes, but throw out some of the money."

Then Tom called out as loud as he could, " Very well: hold your hands, here it comes."

The cook heard this quite plain, so she sprang out of bed and ran to open the door. The thieves ran off as if a wolf was at their tails; and the maid, having groped about and found nothing, went away for a light.

By the time she returned, Tom had slipped into the barn; and when the cook had looked about and searched every hole and

corner, and found nobody, she went to bed, thinking she must have been dreaming with her eyes open. The little man crawled about in the hay-loft, and at last found a glorious place to finish his night's rest in; so he laid himself down, meaning to sleep till daylight, and then find his way home to his father and mother.

But alas! how cruelly was he disappointed! what crosses and sorrows happen in this world! The cook got up early before day-break to feed the cows: she went straight to the hay-loft, and carried away a large bundle of hay with the little man in the middle of it fast asleep. He still, however, slept on, and did not awake till he found himself in the mouth of the cow, who had taken him up with a mouthful of hay. " Good lack-a-day! " said he. " How did I manage to tumble into the mill? "

But he soon found out where he really was, and was obliged to have all his wits about him in order that he might not get between the cow's teeth and so be crushed to death. At last down he went into her stomach. " It is rather dark here," said he; " they forgot to build windows in this room to let the sun in; a candle would be no bad thing."

Though he made the best of his bad luck, he did not like his quarters at all; and the worst of it was, that more and more hay was always coming down, and the space in which he was became smaller and smaller. At last he cried out as loud as he could, " Don't bring me any more hay! Don't bring me any more hay! "

The maid happened to be just then milking the cow, and hearing someone speak and seeing nobody, and yet being quite sure it was the same voice that she had heard in the night, she was so frightened that she fell off her stool and overset the milk-pail. She ran off as fast as she could to her master the parson, and said, " Sir, sir, the cow is talking! "

But the parson said, " Woman, thou art surely mad! " However, he went with her into the cow-house to see what was the matter. Scarcely had they set their foot on the threshold when Tom called out, " Don't bring me any more hay! "

Then the parson himself was frightened; and thinking the cow was surely bewitched, ordered that she should be killed directly. So the cow was killed, and the stomach, in which Tom lay, was thrown out upon a dunghill.

Tom soon set to work to get out, which was not a very easy task; but at last, just as he made room to get his head out, a new misfortune befell him: a hungry wolf sprang out, and swallowed the whole stomach, with Tom in it, at a single gulp, and ran away.

Tom, however, was not disheartened; and thinking the wolf would not dislike having a chat with him as he was going along, he called out, " My good friend, I can show you a famous treat."

" Where's that? " said the wolf.

" In such and such a house," said Tom, describing his father's house, " you can crawl through the drain into the kitchen, and there you will find cakes, ham, beef, and everything your heart can desire."

The wolf did not want to be asked twice; so that very night he went to the house and crawled through the drain into the kitchen, and ate and drank there to his heart's content. As soon as he was satisfied, he wanted to get away; but he had eaten so much that he could not get out the same way that he came in. This was just what Tom had reckoned upon; and he now began to set up a great shout, making all the noise he could.

" Will you be quiet? " said the wolf: " you'll awaken everybody in the house."

" What's that to me? " said the little man: " you have had your frolic, now I've a mind to be merry myself "; and he began again singing and shouting as loud as he could.

The woodman and his wife, being awakened by the noise, peeped through a crack in the door; but when they saw that the wolf was there, you may well suppose that they were terribly frightened; and the woodman ran for his axe, and gave his wife a scythe. " Now do you stay behind," said the woodman, " and when I have knocked him on the head, do you rip up his belly for him with the scythe."

Tom heard all this, and said, " Father, father! I am here, the wolf has swallowed me "; and his father said, " Heaven be praised! we have found our dear child again," and he told his wife not to use the scythe, for fear she should hurt him.

Then he aimed a great blow, and struck the wolf on the head, and killed him on the spot; and when he was dead they cut open his body and set Tommy free.

" Ah! " said the father, " what fears we have had for you! "

" Yes, father," answered he. " I have travelled all over the world since we parted, in one way or other; and now I am very glad to get fresh air again."

" Why, where have you been? " said his father.

" I have been in a mouse-hole, in a snail-shell, down a cow's throat, and in the wolf's belly; and yet here I am again, safe and sound."

" Well," said they, " we will not sell you again for all the riches in the world."

So they hugged and kissed their dear little son, and gave him plenty to eat and drink, and fetched new clothes for him, for his old ones were quite spoiled on his journey.

BROTHERS GRIMM

THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES

THERE was once a king who had twelve lovely daughters. They slept in twelve beds all in one room, and when they went to bed the doors were shut and locked up; but every morning their shoes were found to be quite worn through, as if they had been danced in all night, and yet nobody could find how it happened, or where they had been.

Then the king made it known to all the land, that if any person could discover the secret, and find out where it was that the princesses danced at night, he should have the one he liked best for his wife, and should be king after his death; but whoever tried and did not succeed after three days and nights should be put to death.

A king's son soon came. He was well entertained, and in the evening was taken to the chamber next to the one where the princesses lay in their twelve beds. There he was to sit and watch where they went to dance; and in order that nothing might pass without his hearing it, the door of his chamber was left open. But the king's son soon fell asleep, and when he awoke in the morning he found that the princesses had all been dancing, for the soles of their shoes were worn full of holes. The same thing happened the second and third night; so the king ordered his head to be cut off. After him came several others, but they had all the same luck, and all lost their lives in the same manner.

Now it chanced that an old soldier, who had been wounded in battle and could fight no longer, passed through the country where this king reigned, and as he was travelling through a wood, he met an old woman who asked him where he was going.

"I hardly know where I am going, or what I shall do," said the soldier, "but I think I should like very well to find out where it is that the princesses dance, and then in time I might be a king."

"Well!" said the old dame, "that is no very hard task, only take care not to drink any of the wine which one of the princesses will bring to you in the evening, and as soon as she leaves you, pretend to be fast asleep."

Then she gave him a cloak, and said:

"As soon as you put that on you will become invisible, and you will then be able to follow the princesses wherever they go."

When the soldier heard all this good counsel, he determined to try his luck; so he went to the king and said he was willing to undertake the trial. He was as well received as the others had been, and the king ordered fine royal robes to be given him, and when the evening came he was led to the outward chamber. Just as he was going to lie down, the eldest of the princesses brought him a cup of wine; but the soldier threw it all away secretly, taking care not to drink a drop.

Then he laid himself down on his bed, and in a little time began to snore very loud, as if he was fast asleep. When the twelve princesses heard this they laughed heartily, and the eldest said:

"This fellow too might have done a wiser thing than lose his life in this way!"

Then they rose up and opened their drawers and boxes, and took out all their fine clothes, and dressed themselves at the glass, and skipped about as if they were eager to begin dancing.

But the youngest said, "I don't know how it is, while you are so happy I feel very uneasy; I am sure some mischance will befall us."

"You simpleton," said the eldest, "you are always afraid; have you forgotten how many kings' sons have already watched us in vain? And as for this soldier, even if I had not given him his sleeping-draught he would have slept soundly enough."

When they were all ready they went and looked at the soldier; but he snored on and did not stir hand or foot; so they thought they were quite safe, and the eldest went up to her own bed and clapped her hands, and the bed sank into the floor and a trap-door flew open. The soldier saw them going down through the trap-door one after another, the eldest leading the way; and thinking he had no time to lose he jumped up and followed them: but in the middle of the stairs he trod on the gown of the youngest princess, and she cried out to her sisters:

"All is not right; some one took hold of my gown."

"You silly creature," said the eldest, "it is nothing but a nail in the wall."

Then down they all went, and at the bottom they found themselves in a most delightful grove of trees, and the leaves were all of silver, and glittered and sparkled beautifully. The soldier wished to take away some token of the place; so he broke off a little branch, and there came a loud noise from the tree. Then the youngest daughter said again:

"I am sure all is not right; did you not hear that noise? That never happened before."

But the eldest said, " It is only our princes who are shouting for joy at our approach."

They then came to another grove of trees, where all the leaves were of gold; and afterwards to a third, where the leaves were all diamonds. And the soldier broke a branch from each; and every time there was a loud noise, which made the youngest sister tremble with fear; but the eldest still said it was only the princes who were crying for joy. So they went on till they came to a great lake; and at the side of the lake there lay twelve little boats with twelve handsome princes in them, who seemed to be waiting there for the princesses.

One of the princesses went into each boat, and the soldier stepped into the same boat with the youngest. As they were rowing over the lake, the prince who was in the boat with the youngest princess and the soldier said:

" I do not know why it is, but though I am rowing with all my might, we do not get on so fast as usual, and I am quite tired; the boat seems very heavy to-day."

" It is only the heat of the weather," said the princess; " I feel it very warm too."

On the other side of the lake stood a fine illuminated castle, from which came the merry music of horns and trumpets. There they all landed, and went into the castle, and each prince danced with his princess; while the soldier, who was all the while invisible, danced with them too; and when any of the princesses had a cup of wine set by her, he drank it all up, so that when she put the cup to her mouth it was empty.

At this, too, the youngest sister was terribly frightened, but the eldest always silenced her. They danced on till three o'clock in the morning, and then all their shoes were worn out, so that they were obliged to leave off. The princes rowed them back again over the lake; but this time the soldier placed himself in the boat with the eldest princess, and on the opposite shore they took leave of each other; the princesses promising to come again the next night.

When they came to the stairs, the soldier ran on before the princesses and laid himself down; and as the twelve sisters slowly came up, very much tired, they heard him snoring in his bed, so they said, " Now all is quite safe "; then they undressed themselves, put away their fine clothes, pulled off their shoes, and went to bed.

In the morning the soldier said nothing about what had happened, but determined to see more of this strange adventure, and went again the second and third night; and everything happened just as before; the princesses danced each time till their shoes were worn to pieces, and then returned home. However, on the third night the soldier carried away one of the gold cups as a token of where he had been.

As soon as the time came when he was to declare the secret, he was taken before the king with the three branches and the golden cup; and the twelve princesses stood listening behind the door to hear what he would say. And when the king asked him, "Where do my twelve daughters dance at night?" he answered, "With twelve princes in a castle underground."

And then he told the king all that had happened, and showed him the three branches and the golden cup which he had brought with him. Then the king called for the princesses, and asked them whether what the soldier said was true; and when they saw that they were discovered, and that it was of no use to deny what had happened, they confessed it all. And the king asked the soldier which of them he would choose for his wife; and he answered:

"I am not very young, so I think I will have the eldest."

And they were married that very day, and the soldier was chosen to be the king's heir.

BROTHERS GRIMM

THE TURNIP

THERE were two brothers who were both soldiers; the one was rich, the other poor. The poor man thought he would try to better himself; so, pulling off his red coat, he became a gardener, and dug his ground well, and sowed turnips.

When the seed came up, there was one plant bigger than all the rest; and it kept getting larger and larger, and seemed as if it would never cease growing; so that it might have been called the prince of turnips, for there never was such a one seen before, and never will again. At last it was so big that it filled a cart, and two oxen could hardly draw it; and the gardener knew not what in the world to do with it, nor whether it would be a blessing or a curse to him. One day he said to himself:

"What shall I do with it? If I sell it, it will bring no more than another; and for eating, the little turnips are better than this; the best thing perhaps is to carry it and give it to the king as a mark of respect."

Then he yoked his oxen, and drew the turnip to the court, and gave it to the king.

"What a wonderful thing!" said the king: "I have seen many strange things, but such a monster as this I never saw. Where did you get the seed? or is it only your good luck? If so, you are a true child of fortune."

"Ah, no!" answered the gardener, "I am no child of fortune; I am a poor soldier, who never could get enough to live upon; so I laid aside my red coat, and set to work, tilling the ground. I have a brother, who is rich, and your majesty knows him well, and all the world knows him; but because I am poor, everybody forgets me."

The king then took pity on him, and said, "You shall be poor no longer. I will give you so much that you shall be even richer than your brother."

Then he gave him gold and lands and flocks, and made him so rich that his brother's fortune could not at all be compared with his.

When the brother heard of all this, and how a turnip had made the gardener so rich, he envied him sorely, and bethought himself how he could contrive to get the same good fortune for himself.

However, he determined to manage more cleverly than his brother, and got together a rich present of gold and fine horses for the king; and thought he must have a much larger gift in return: for if his brother had received so much for only a turnip, what must his present be worth?

The king took the gift very graciously, and said he knew not what to give in return more valuable and wonderful than the great turnip; so the soldier was forced to put it into a cart and drag it home with him. When he reached home he knew not upon whom to vent his rage and spite; and at length wicked thoughts came into his head, and he resolved to kill his brother.

So he hired some villains to murder him; and having shown them where to lie in ambush, he went to his brother and said, " Dear brother, I have found a hidden treasure; let us go and dig it up, and share it between us."

The other had no suspicions of his roguery; so they went out together, and as they were travelling along, the murderers rushed out upon him, bound him, and were going to hang him on a tree.

But whilst they were getting all ready, they heard the trampling of a horse at a distance, which so frightened them that they pushed their prisoner neck and shoulders together into a sack, and swung him up by a cord to the tree, where they left him dangling, and ran away. Meanwhile he worked and worked away, till he made a hole large enough to put out his head.

When the horseman came up he proved to be a student, a merry fellow, who was journeying along on his nag, and singing as he went. As soon as the man in the sack saw him passing under the tree, he cried out, " Good-morning! good-morning to thee, my friend! "

The student looked about everywhere, and seeing no one, and not knowing where the voice came from, cried out:

" Who calls me? "

Then the man in the tree answered:

" Lift up thine eyes, for behold here I sit in the sack of wisdom; here have I, in a short time, learned great and wondrous things. Compared to this seat, all the learning of the schools is as empty air. A little longer, and I shall know all that man can know, and shall come forth wiser than the wisest of mankind. Here I discern the signs and motions of the heavens and the stars, the laws that control the winds, the number of the sands on the sea-shore, the healing of the sick, the virtues of all simples, of birds, and of precious stones. Wert thou but once here, my friend, thou wouldst feel and own the power of knowledge."

The student listened to all this, and wondered much; at last he said:

" Blessed be the day and hour when I found you; cannot you contrive to let me into the sack for a little while? "

Then the other answered, as if very unwillingly, " A little space I may allow thee to sit here, if thou wilt reward me well and entreat me kindly; but thou must tarry yet an hour below, till I have learned some little matters that are yet unknown to me."

So the student sat himself down and waited a while; but the time hung heavy upon him, and he begged earnestly that he might ascend forthwith, for his thirst of knowledge was great. Then the other pretended to give way, and said:

" Thou must let the sack of wisdom descend, by untying yonder cord, and then thou shalt enter."

So the student let him down, opened the sack, and set him free.

" Now, then," cried he, " let me ascend quickly."

As he began to put himself into the sack, heels first, " Wait a while," said the gardener, " that is not the way."

Then he pushed him in head first, tied up the sack, and soon swung up the searcher after wisdom, dangling in the air.

" How is it with thee, friend? " said he, " dost thou not feel that wisdom comes unto thee? Rest there in peace till thou art a wiser man than thou wert."

So saying, he trotted off on the student's nag, and left the poor fellow to gather wisdom till somebody should come and let him down.

BROTHERS GRIMM

PEE-WIT

A POOR countryman whose name was Pee-wit lived with his wife in a very quiet way in the parish where he was born. One day, as he was ploughing with his two oxen in the field, he heard all on a sudden some one calling out his name. Turning round, he saw nothing but a bird that kept crying Pee-wit, Pee-wit!

Now this poor bird is called a Pee-wit, and like the cuckoo always keeps crying out its own name.

But the countryman thought it was mocking him, so he took up a huge stone and threw at it; the bird flew off safe and sound, but the stone fell upon the head of one of the oxen, and killed him on the spot.

"What is to be done with the odd one?" thought Pee-wit to himself as he looked at the ox that was left; so without more ado he killed him too, skinned them both, and set out for the neighbouring town to sell the hides to the tanner for as much as he could get.

He soon found out where the tanner lived, and knocked at the door. Before, however, the door was opened, he saw through the window that the mistress of the house was hiding in an old chest a friend of hers, whom she seemed to wish no one should see. By and by the door was opened.

"What do you want?" said the woman. Then he told her that he wanted to sell his hides; and it came out that the tanner was not at home, and that no one there ever made bargains but himself.

The countryman said he would sell cheap, and did not mind giving his hides for the old chest in the corner, meaning the one he had seen the good woman's friend get into. Of course, the wife would not agree to this, and they went on talking the matter over so long that at last in came the tanner and asked what it was all about.

Pee-wit told him the whole story, and asked him whether he would give the old chest for the hides.

"To be sure I will," said he; and scolded his wife for saying nay to such a bargain, which she ought to have been glad to make if the countryman was willing.

Then up he took the chest on his shoulders, and all the good

woman could say mattered nothing; away it went into the countryman's cart and off he drove.

But when they had gone some way the young man within began to make himself heard, and to beg and pray to be let out.

Pee-wit, however, was not to be bought over, till at last after a long parley a thousand marks were bid and taken; the money was paid, and at the price the poor fellow was set free, and went about his business.

Then Pee-wit went home very happy, and built a new house and seemed so rich that his neighbours wondered, and said, "Pee-wit must have been where the golden snow falls." So they took him before the next Justice of the Peace, to give an account of himself, and show that he came honestly by his wealth; and then he told them that he had sold his hides for one thousand dollars.

When they heard it they all killed their oxen and would sell the hides to the same tanner; but the Justice said, "My maid shall have the first chance," so off she went, and when she came to the tanner, he laughed at them all, and said he had given their neighbour nothing but an old chest.

At this they were all very angry, and laid their heads together to work him some mischief, which they thought they could do while he was digging in his garden.

All this, however, came to the ears of the countryman, who was plagued with a sad scold for his wife; and he thought to himself, "If any one is to come into trouble, I don't see why it should not be my wife, rather than me"; so he said to her that he wished she would humour him in a whim he had taken into his head, and would put on his clothes, and dig the garden in his stead.

The wife did what was asked, and next morning began digging; but soon came some of the neighbours, and, thinking it was Pee-wit, threw a stone at her (harder perhaps than they meant), and killed her at once.

Poor Pee-wit was rather sorry at this, but still thought that he had had a lucky escape for himself, and that perhaps he might after all turn the death of his wife to some account; so he dressed her in her own clothes, put a basket with fine fruit (which was now scarce, it being winter) into her hand, and sat her by the roadside on a broad bench.

After a while came by a fine coach with six horses, servants, and outriders, and within sat a noble lord who lived not far off. When his lordship saw the beautiful fruit, he sent one of the servants to the woman to ask what was the price of her goods.

The man went and asked:

"What is the price of this fruit?"

No answer.

He asked again.

No answer: and when this had happened three times, he became angry; and, thinking she was asleep, gave her a blow, and down she fell backwards into the pond that was behind the seat. Then up ran Pee-wit and cried and sorrowed because they had drowned his poor wife, and threatened to have the lord and his servants tried for what they had done.

His lordship begged him to be easy, and offered to give him the coach and horses, servants and all; so the countryman after a long time let himself be appeased a little, took what they gave, got into the coach and set off towards his own home again.

As he came near, the neighbours wondered much at the beautiful coach and horses, and still more when they stopped, and Pee-wit got out at his own door. Then he told them the whole story, which only vexed them still more; so they took him and fastened him up in a tub and were going to throw him into the lake that was hard by. Whilst they were rolling the tub on before them towards the water, they passed by an alehouse and stopped to refresh themselves a little before they put an end to Pee-wit; meantime they tied the tub to a tree and there left it while they were enjoying themselves within doors.

Pee-wit no sooner found himself alone than he began to turn over in his mind how he could get free. He listened, and soon heard Ba, ba! from a flock of sheep and lambs that were coming by.

Then he lifted up his voice, and shouted out:

"I will not be burgomaster, I say; I will not be made burgomaster."

The shepherd hearing this went up, and said:

"What is all this noise about?"

"Oh!" said Pee-wit, "my neighbours will make me burgomaster against my will; and when I told them I would not agree, they put me into a cask and are going to throw me into the lake."

"I should like very much to be burgomaster if I were you," said the shepherd.

"Open the cask then," said the other, "and let me out and get in yourself, and they will make you burgomaster instead of me." No sooner said than done, the shepherd was in, Pee-wit was out; and as there was nobody to take care of the shepherd's flock, he drove it off merrily towards his own house.

When the neighbours came out of the alehouse, they rolled the cask on, and the shepherd began to cry out, "I will be burgomaster now; I will be burgomaster now."

"I dare say you will, but you shall take a swim first," said a neighbour, as he gave the cask the last push over into the lake.

This done, away they went home merrily, leaving the shepherd to get out as well as he could.

But as they came in at one side of the village, who should they

meet coming in the other way but Pee-wit driving a fine flock of sheep and lambs before him.

"How came you here?" cried all with one voice.

"Oh! the lake is enchanted," said he; "when you threw me in, I sunk deep and deep into the water, till at last I came to the bottom; there I knocked out the bottom of the cask and found myself in a beautiful meadow with fine flocks grazing upon it, so I chose a few for myself, and here I am."

"Cannot we have some too?" said they.

"Why not? There are hundreds and thousands left; you have nothing to do but jump in and fetch them out."

So all agreed they would dive for sheep; the Justice first, then the clerk, then the constables, and then the rest of the parish, one after the other.

When they came to the side of the lake, the blue sky was covered with little white clouds like flocks of sheep, and all were reflected in the clear water; so they called out, "There they are, there they are already"; and fearing lest the Justice should get everything, they jumped in all at once; and Pee-wit jogged home, and made himself happy with what he had got, leaving them to find their flocks by themselves as well as they could.

BROTHERS GRIMM

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

THERE was a man who had three sons. The youngest was called Dummling, and was on all occasions despised and ill-treated by the whole family.

It happened that the eldest took it into his head one day to go into the wood to cut fuel; and his mother gave him a delicious pasty and a bottle of wine to take with him, that he might refresh himself at his work. As he went into the wood, a little old man bade him good day, and said:

"Give me a little piece of meat from your plate, and a little wine out of your bottle; I am very hungry and thirsty."

But this clever young man said, "Give you my meat and wine! No, I thank you; I should not have enough left for myself": and away he went. He soon began to cut down a tree; but he had not worked long before he missed his stroke, and cut himself, and was obliged to go home to have the wound dressed. Now it was the little old man that caused him this mischief.

Next went out the second son to work; and his mother gave him, too, a pasty and a bottle of wine. And the same little old man met him also, and asked him for something to eat and drink. But he, too, thought himself vastly clever, and said, "Whatever you get, I shall lose; so go your way!"

The little man took care that he should have his reward, and the second stroke that he aimed against a tree hit him on the leg, so that he too was forced to go home.

Then Dummling said, "Father, I should like to go and cut wood too."

But his father answered, "Your brothers have both lamed themselves; you had better stay at home, for you know nothing of the business."

But Dummling was very pressing; and at last his father said, "Go your way; you will be wiser when you have suffered for your folly."

And his mother gave him only some dry bread, and a bottle of sour beer; but when he went into the wood he met the little old man, who said, "Give me some meat and drink, for I am very hungry and thirsty."

Dummling said, " I have only dry bread and sour beer; if that will suit you, we will sit down and eat it together."

So they sat down, and when the lad pulled out his bread behold it was turned into a capital pasty, and his sour beer became delightful wine. They ate and drank heartily; and when they had done, the little man said, " As you have a kind heart, and have been willing to share everything with me, I will send a blessing upon you. There stands an old tree, cut it down and you will find something at the root."

Then he took his leave, and went his way.

Dummling set to work, and cut down the tree; and when it fell, he found in a hollow under the roots a goose with feathers of pure gold. He took it up and went on to an inn, where he proposed to sleep for the night. The landlord had three daughters, and when they saw the goose they were very curious to examine what this wonderful bird could be, and wished very much to pluck one of the feathers out of its tail.

At last the eldest said, " I must and will have a feather." So she waited till his back was turned, and then seized the goose by the wing; but to her great surprise there she stuck, for neither hand nor finger could she get away again.

Presently in came the second sister, and thought to have a feather too; but the moment she touched her sister, there she too hung fast.

At last came the third, and wanted a feather; but the other two cried out, " Keep away, for heaven's sake, keep away! "

However, she did not understand what they meant. " If they are there," thought she, " I may as well be there too." So she went up to them; but the moment she touched her sisters she stuck fast, and hung to the goose as they did. And so they kept company with the goose all night.

The next morning Dummling carried off the goose under his arm, and took no notice of the three girls, but went out with them sticking fast behind; and wherever he travelled they too were obliged to follow, whether they would or no, as fast as their legs could carry them.

In the middle of a field the parson met them; and when he saw the train, he said, " Are you not ashamed of yourselves, you bold girls, to run after the young man in that way over the fields? Is that proper behaviour? "

Then he took the youngest by the hand to lead her away; but the moment he touched her he too hung fast, and followed in the train.

Presently up came the clerk; and when he saw his master the parson running after the three girls, he wondered greatly, and said, " Hollo! Hollo! your reverence! whither so fast? there is a

christening to-day." Then he ran up and took him by the gown, and in a moment he was fast too.

As the five were thus trudging along, one behind another, they met two labourers with their mattocks coming from work; and the parson cried out to them to set him free. But scarcely had they touched him when they too fell into the ranks, and so made seven all running after Dummling and his goose.

At last they arrived at a city where reigned a king who had an only daughter. The princess was of so thoughtful and serious a turn of mind that no one could make her laugh; and the king had proclaimed to all the world that whoever could make her laugh should have her for his wife.

When the young man heard this, he went to her with his goose and all its train; and as soon as she saw the seven all hanging together, and running about, treading on each other's heels, she could not help bursting into a long and loud laugh.

Then Dummling claimed her for his wife; the wedding was celebrated, and he was heir to the kingdom, and lived long and happily with his wife.

KARL GOTTLIEB PRAETZEL

1785–1861

A FATHER'S AUTHORITY

I

In the afternoon of a hot summer's day a small crowd collected outside the house of Herr Helbrich, and in spite of all conjectures, and even though some of them mounted the piles of wooden planks that were stacked up there, they failed to solve the riddle presented to them.

That the Master Carpenter should be thrashing his thirteen-year-old son near the open window was not very startling, for such occurrences had been witnessed before; but that with every blow he should shout, " Will you marry Fräulein Filterhof immediately? You rascal! Will you marry her this moment? " and that the boy should always reply, " No, father, not if you kill me! " was an adjunct incapable of explanation by even the most sagacious member of the crowd.

After giving such an indisputable proof of his strength and endurance the old man sank into his arm-chair thoroughly exhausted, while his son crawled behind the stove out of sight of the onlookers, who, seeing that no explanation of the cause of this extraordinary affair would be forthcoming, dispersed.

Though he had received the benefit of his father's opinions before in a similarly practical fashion, the boy had not expected that an innocent utterance would lead to such an utter defeat, and that those parts of his anatomy that primarily met the assault would give the good town fresh food for gossip.

" Father, have you heard that Fritz Hassling is going to marry that stout Susan Quermann? She will look a guy in her bridal dress! " he had called out as he returned from school.

" Well, and what concern is it of yours? " said the old man, who had been indulging in his afternoon nap and now sat up crossly. " Old Herr Hassling is a very sensible man, and he knows what girl to choose for his son! "

" But, father, I thought fellows chose their own wives? How can other people know whom they like or dislike? "

" Rubbish! " shouted the old man, who was getting very cross;

" the father's wishes must be obeyed without question; so don't talk! "

" But supposing they both think absolutely differently? Say, for instance, you wanted me to marry that ugly Fräulein Filterhof across the——"

" Of course I should not think of her, you silly boy; but presuming I did, what would you do then, ha? "

" I should say, ' Excuse me, father, I am your obedient son in every way, but this one——' "

" What? You would disobey my command, my boy? "

" Consider, father, to obey you in this matter would be impossible; or——"

" I should like to see that," now cried out the old hothead, jumping up from his arm-chair and reaching down the cane from behind a picture. " Will you at once and without objections do as I tell you and marry Fräulein Filterhof? " But not even the sight of the cane could influence the boy, and so occurred the incident we have just witnessed. Among those who saw and heard the incident was the old maid in question, Barbara Filterhof. Her parlour lying just opposite the scene of the tragedy, she had an uninterrupted view of the whole proceedings and was able to understand every word and to calculate to a nicety from the highest point of the Master's cane to the place where it would descend the rhythm of the swings, while she herself was screened by the white lace curtains. Annoyed by the emphatic words of the boy, she was in turn made happy by the equally decisive commands of the father, and finally sat down well pleased and smiling, reproving her twelve-year-old niece, an orphan who lived with her, for the sympathy she expressed for the youth.

II

The consequences of this somewhat theatrical exhibition were more far-reaching than could have been expected. The Master Carpenter rightly presumed that his reputation in the town as an upright, level-headed, well-balanced man would not be enhanced by this occurrence; but instead of laying the blame for this at his own door he heaped it on the boy, who, in response to a peremptory summons, came out from his corner. " I have been much too indulgent with you up till now," he wound up his long reprimand; " but all that will be changed, my boy. From now onward you will not have your own way in the very slightest matter! Fancy you estranging me from Fräulein Filterhof by your insubordinate behaviour! Away to bed this minute! "

With troubled face Franz slunk from the room; with a happy heart he hurried up the two staircases to his gabled attic. With the

left hand he slipped the bolt while with the right he groped under the corner cupboard for his *Robinson Crusoe*, which lay hidden there, and which he would enjoy more than reading to his father, as had been his nightly duty, from the old book of home-sermons. Carefully he opened the little window to get the benefit of the last rays of the evening sun. He cast shy glances down to the windows of the cause of all his troubles, but only saw little Luise there. She immediately caught his eye, and soon afterwards a slight coughing at the little attic window opposite attracted his attention. As in consequence of the exposed position of the two attics even the softest conversation was extremely dangerous they had to make use of signs; and before his whole story and all her sympathy could be fully exchanged, night fell and ended their happy interchange of confidences. In another ten minutes the fatherly command had at last been obeyed: Franz was in bed.

III

" Before you go to school," called Herr Helbrich to his son in cold tones next morning, " you will call at Fräulein Filterhof's and ask her pardon for your execrable behaviour of yesterday." With the slightest encouragement Franz would have protested against this order; but seeing the threatening mien of the old man, who by a good night's rest had thoroughly regained the necessary powers for administering a further chastisement, he did not wish to invite the same " dessert " after his breakfast as was handed to him after his supper the previous evening. He therefore made his way across the road followed to the gate of his enemy by the scowling look of his father. His heart rejoiced as on the stair he met Luise, who eyed him wonderingly. " Just think, Luise," he told her disgustedly, " my father has sent me to make my apologies to your aunt for refusing to marry her! " and bursting into roars of laughter she preceded him into her aunt's room.

Fräulein Barbara received him most kindly and quickly interrupted his stammered words, spoken in utter humiliation. His courage, already awakened on the stairs, now quickly rose and so did this charming woman in his estimation.

" Oh, don't mention it, dear Franz," she called to him, " it was just all fun; and I'm only too sorry you've had to bear such a punishment! Come again soon and often, and you will be sure to like me. We shall be great friends yet! "

" Oh, please, dear lady, I will gladly do anything you wish me to! " replied Franz, and when pushed into a chair and offered a piece of cake by his magnanimous enemy he very soon promised to repeat his visit soon.

In high glee he rushed down the stairs; but why, on entering his

father's presence, he made his features assume a solemn look, he hardly knew himself. " She has forgiven me everything," he answered in reply to his father's question, and added with wrinkled forehead and sour face, " even wants me to come again from time to time."

" And that you will without further ado! " his father roughly told him. Franz needed no such reminder, for Barbara's sweet friendliness, and still more her sweet cake, had completely captured him; but he never relaxed his features nor gave any sign of satisfaction, and shouldering his bag went off to school.

" The boy still seems obstinate! " the old man told himself when Franz had left. " I shall make it my sacred duty to knock all opposition out of him. In no matter however small will I let him have his own way. I will let him feel my fatherly hand."

And the Master Carpenter kept his word. That same day he proved his firm resolve. As Franz—as was customary after his evening meal—ran to fetch the book of homilies and without a word prepared to read to him, " Have you been asked for this? Or do you think that is unnecessary? " he queried.

" I've had to read to you every night out of the *postil*," he answered dejectedly, " therefore I wanted——"

" You must not want anything! " wrathfully interrupted his father. " Nothing at all! Off to your room you go this minute! Do you hear? "

Franz did not hesitate to carry out a careful retreat immediately, and delighted at the success of his diplomatic manœuvre. Finding himself a few minutes later at his garret window he was delighted to see Luise opposite him already. They were happy to resume their pantomimic conversation of the previous evening, a conversation which was now less difficult, since the meeting in the morning at her aunt's had made so many of the happenings clearer to both of them.

IV

Gradually Franz had perfected the system by which he received from his father just those orders that corresponded to his own wishes; and now the time approached when he would leave school and enter on a business career. " It had always been my intention," one evening began the Master Carpenter, " to apprentice you to my good friend the tallow chandler Quarz. However, circumstances have changed; and although you have now for some time looked forward to going to him, I think after all he is too soft-hearted a man and would be unable properly to subdue your pig-headedness or to keep a firm enough hand on you. You will therefore remain here and assist me in my wood business! "

Franz, who was overjoyed at this decision, yet managed to hide his delight simply by thinking of the awful fate that would have been his had he been sent to soap-boiler Quarz. So he postponed his expression of delight to a more suitable occasion. Presently he began to devote his careful attention to his father's business, which all along had seemed to him, everything considered, quite the most desirable of occupations.

Meanwhile Fräulein Barbara's endeavours to win the young fellow over to her began to show undeniable signs of success; her kindness, her cakes, her sweets, and above all her motherly care of Luise, although she had not intended that this factor should influence him, all helped to draw Franz to her. She was too sensible a woman to take the father's words, "Will you marry her!" emphasized as they were by the cane, seriously; yet the boy's refusal had rather hurt her and certainly induced her to show him that she was not a woman to be despised out of hand. She succeeded admirably, and in time the boy grew really fond of her; for the great kindness she showed him reminded him always of his mother's gentle care, which had been denied him early in his life.

V

But even between the Master Carpenter and his son's patroness an intimacy had sprung up since that famous summer's day. He often visited his neighbour of an evening to discourse to her on the political news contained in the daily paper, explaining to her the intricate points; and as he believed himself to be rather an expert in such matters he insisted that his son should always be there as a silent participant in the intellectual feast set before him. Franz neither liked the subject nor the way in which it was discussed and interpreted; but he was even then politician enough only to show his dislike when there was a likelihood of his father leaving him at home. One little word to that effect and the command would as surely go forth to him to get himself ready to accompany his father.

During those visits Franz's behaviour would have done honour to a young diplomat, if the love that gradually grew in his heart did not rather account for his demeanour. For hours he would sit quietly in the chair assigned to him, never taking any notice of Luise, who pursued the same tactics. Only his father's reproving look would induce him to pick up Luise's refractory ball of wool or hunt for one of the knitting needles for which she was looking. Strange to say, too, she seemed to accept his services very ungraciously; though she was ready enough to give Franz frequent opportunities of earning his father's scowls. "These two young people seem thoroughly to dislike one another," the old political

expert thought to himself. " Well, all the better, then I needn't keep such a close watch over my young rascal." But the old man meant his boy to conform to the necessary standard of good manners anyway; so he saw to it that in future Franz and Luise took their places close together at the table. He little suspected that while he tried to enlighten Fräulein Barbara across the table on the political situation, two pairs of feet beneath it managed to understand each other perfectly.

One night Franz had got his foot too far to the right, and on the way home his father said to him: " Franz, you really are a young pup! I know that kick I got was meant for Luise. Now that I have stopped you making faces at her from your window you start kicking the girl under the table! Don't deny it, you stupid boy; and don't forget that if she should ever complain of you in the slightest, your height won't prevent me from exercising my right to give you as many more thrashings as I choose to hand out to you."

But the young boy soon outstripped his father in height and took good care that never should he read in Luise's eye any accusation against himself. Luise, too, had grown during these last few years and loved the happy evenings spent in Franz's company; while he, who so far had been perfectly happy in the many meetings under the supervision of the old people, now began, ever more attracted by her youthful charms and loveliness, to feel a keen desire for more intimate companionship and to dream of the undisputed possession of this lovely girl as the greatest happiness of his life.

VI

Just as his sky seemed so clear and bright, heavy clouds began to form, and soon threatened to overwhelm him. His father, through some unfortunate miscalculations and mistakes, suddenly found his prosperous business on the verge of ruin. Already the old man was being severely pressed by his creditors, and saw no way out of the terrible position he himself had brought about by his speculations.

Thus one evening, after he had just received some decisive bad news, he picked up his newspaper mechanically and made his way to Fräulein Barbara's across the road, intending to lead the conversation to his misfortune and to discuss with his old friend the ways and means of lightening the blow. There was no need for him to exercise any diplomacy, however; for the moment he entered she had seen that he was crushed down by some great misfortune. Luise had left the room at a sign from her aunt, who now kindly inquired about his affairs, and with judicious questions soon put him at his ease; so, quickly recovering his composure, he told her that

he was face to face with complete financial ruin, informing her that in just two days the state of his affairs would be known to the world.

Deeply sympathising with her friend and assuring him that she would do anything in her power to tide him over his misfortunes, she took his hand in hers, and, begging him to believe in her earnest desire to help him, explained to him that circumstances made it absolutely impossible for her to lend him any financial assistance. This was not the kind of sympathy Herr Helbrich had expected; for well he knew that she would have but to touch a small part of her fortune to put an end to all his troubles. That was why he had set his last hope confidently on her.

"An advance of but a few hundred pounds would save me!" he cried with shaking voice and staring hard on the floor the while, as that often quoted saying about a friend in need flashed through his brain.

"I will return confidence for confidence, dear neighbour, and show you how circumstances prevent me from rendering you that assistance which I would otherwise not withhold!" said Barbara, who could follow his thoughts as if he had given utterance to them. "As far back as two years ago I transferred my fortune, of which considerably more than half was left me by her mother in trust for the girl, to Luise. Although I have not yet acquainted her with this fact, I shouldn't now like to take a step in regard to this money which at some future date I might have cause to regret. Only Franz could help in this difficulty, and, seeing how much I think of him, I certainly wouldn't withhold my consent if his desires should at all lie in Luise's direction."

"But, my dear Fräulein Barbara," here interrupted Herr Helbrich, "that seems out of the question; for I know those two young people simply hate the sight of one another! Have you ever noticed how they go out of their way to hurt one another? How they keep apart and never voluntarily address one another? Of course in the case of Franz I could find means to make him obey our wishes; but whether you could use the same against Luise seems to me doubtful, in fact out of the question!"

"Of course in that case," continued Barbara, greatly tickled at his blindness, and smiling craftily, "he might feel even less inclined to carry out a certain proviso in the will, the existence of which has really kept me from speaking to Luise about the money so far."

"A proviso did you say? And may I know its significance?"

"That I am entitled to dispose again of my fortune as I like, if,—but don't look at me so intently, dear neighbour!—if sooner or later I myself may—may wish to marry!——"

"You spoke," stammered the Master Carpenter, "only a few moments ago so highly of my son—of Franz!"

"Certainly I did," whispered she, "and I don't know of any young man I like better than your son!"

"You are perfectly right, dear Fräulein Barbara: he is a good and fine fellow, and he has greatly improved since I took him seriously in hand. If he had a sensible, mature wife—you quite understand what I mean, dear Fräulein Barbara—a wife who could keep a firm hold over him, I am sure he would make quite a satisfactory husband. If, therefore, it was to be——"

"*I* should not decline the honour, dear neighbour."

"Nor shall my boy, dear lady. Of course he has outgrown the cane; but I will find ways and means."

"I have opened my heart to you, dear neighbour, and I think I am entitled to ask you not to hurt my maidenly feelings any further. If you can induce your boy without recourse to disciplinary punishment to propose to me, he will be able to satisfy himself that he need not regret taking the step."

VII

Hope sprang up again in the breast of Herr Helbrich, and no sooner had he got home than he summoned Franz, and, once more emphasising his hopeless position, went into all its details, finally winding up with the glorious news that to him, his only, his dear and devoted son, it was given to save his old father from want and disgrace by marrying Fräulein Filterhof.

"Father, what is it you demand of me?" asked Franz, whose blood ran cold at the idea. "You really seriously mean to ask me now, after eight years, to do what then, regarded merely as a joke, cost me so dear?"

"Upon my soul," cried the old man wrathfully, "this sounds like a refusal! However, I have made up my mind to arrange this affair with you in all kindness and also to give you time to think over it carefully. So take yourself off to bed and let me know to-morrow morning if you are going to save your old father or not."

Franz wanted to argue the matter out there and then; but as the old man covered up both his ears with his hands he ascended to his room, there to seek a solution of the problem.

Awaiting him there, wrapped around a stone that had been pitched in at the window—a stratagem that had been for some time adopted by the lovers—he found a letter from Luise that soon put him into a good humour:

"Agree to everything your father suggests, dear Franz, and be assured that from to-morrow we shall no longer be compelled to communicate with one another in this secret fashion. Rely entirely on my aunt's affection for us and trust your LUISE."

Next morning when he came downstairs Franz looked pale, for he had found but little sleep during the night, not, as his father thought, from considering the enormous sacrifice he was going to make, but from thinking of the fulfilment of all his dearest wishes. Quickly father and son dressed themselves in their Sunday best and made their way to their neighbour across the road. At the foot of her stairs the old man stopped and pressed his son's hand heartily in silence, a tear glistening in his eyes.

Fräulein Barbara, who received them alone, begged them to take their seats at the table and offered them a cup of tea. The Master Carpenter, however, realising the importance of the occasion, would not hear of this, and immediately assuming the correct attitude launched out into a proposal discourse which he had carefully thought out and learnt by heart during the previous night.

" This is against our arrangement," said Fräulein Barbara, interrupting him and gazing hard first at him and then at Franz. But when in response to a sign from his father Franz also made an attempt—a very unsuccessful one—she could contain herself no longer; for these two looked so ludicrous. Running therefore to the door to another room and opening it she brought in Luise, saying, " If you find it so difficult to propose to me, just try your hand with this one. I think you'll manage better in this quarter."

But she was mistaken. Franz was quite incapable of regaining his self-possession or of uttering some even faintly coherent proposal. " Be careful," Fräulein Barbara continued, shaking her finger at him; " all preparations for celebrating the engagement will at once be cancelled if you don't give Luise her betrothal kiss instantly! " This produced the desired result. With boyish zeal he took the blushing girl in his arms and their lips met in a long tender kiss. The old man stood looking on as if turned to stone.

" You see, dear neighbour," Fräulein Barbara exclaimed, " that even though things have not turned out exactly as we arranged yesterday, we shall still in future be one happy family. I hope you will, just as I do, find great satisfaction in the happiness of these two young people."

The old man nodded his head and blessed with unbounded wonderment and satisfaction this alliance, which, even when he dandled its red-cheeked witnesses on his knees in later years, still remained an insoluble mystery to him.

"LOTHAR"

18TH CENTURY

THE ARCH ROGUE

THERE once lived years ago a man known only by the name of the Arch Rogue. By dint of skill in the black art and all arts of imposition he drove a more flourishing trade than all the rest of the sorcerers of his age. It was his delight to travel from one country to another merely to play upon mankind, and no living soul was secure either in house or field, nor could properly call them his own.

Now his great reputation for these speedy methods of possessing himself of others' property excited the envy of a certain king of a certain country, who considered them as no less than an invasion of his royal prerogative. He could not sleep a wink, and he despatched troops of soldiers, one after another, with strict orders to arrest him; but all their researches had been in vain. At length after long meditation the king said to himself, " Only wait a little, thou villain cut-purse; and yet I will have thee! "

So forthwith he issued a manifesto that the royal mercy would be extended to so light-fingered a genius, upon condition that he consented to appear at court and give specimens of his dexterity for his majesty's amusement.

One afternoon as the king was standing at his royal window, commanding a fine prospect of woods and dales, over which a tempest appeared to be just then gathering, some one suddenly clapped him upon the shoulder, and, on looking round, he saw a very tall, stout, dark-whiskered man close behind him, who said, " Here I am! "

" Who are you? " inquired the king.

" He whom you look for! "

The king uttered an exclamation of surprise, not unmixed with fear, at his amazing assurance, for he was quite alone, and he looked a little dashed.

The stranger observing this, said, " Don't be alarmed! only keep your word with me and I will prove myself quite obedient to your orders, and keep the peace."

This being agreed, the king acquainted his royal consort and the whole Court that the great sleight-of-hand genius had discovered

himself; and soon in a full assembly his majesty proceeded to question him: " and mark what I say," he added, " nor venture to dispute one of my orders. To begin: do you see yon rustic not far from the wood, busy ploughing the field? "

The conjuror nodded assent.

" Then go," continued the king; " go and rob him of his plough and oxen, without his knowing anything about it! " At the same time he flattered himself that this was not possible, nor conceived how he could possibly set about it in the face of open day; in which case, thought he, I have him in my power, and will make him smart for it.

The conjuror proceeded to the spot; and as the storm appeared to increase, the rain beginning to pour down in torrents, the countryman, letting his oxen rest, ran under a tree for shelter until the rain should have ceased.

Just then he heard a jolly singing in the wood; such a glorious song he had never before heard in his life. In fact he felt wonderfully enlivened; and as the weather continued to look quite dull and sulky, he said to himself, " Well, where's the harm if I take a glass? Yes, I must see what sport is stirring there "; and away he slipped into the wood, still farther and farther in search of the jovial songster, until he followed his nose so long that he could neither see nor hear anything of it at all.

In the meanwhile the conjuror, that wicked songster in the wood, was not idle. He changed places with the rustic, taking care of the oxen while their master went singing through the wood; and darting out of the thicket, in a few moments he had slashed off the oxen's ears and tails, and stuck them, half hid, in the ploughman's last furrow. He then drove off the beasts pretty sharply towards the palace. In a short time the rustic found his way out of the wood, looked towards the spot for his oxen, and could see nothing.

Then, searching on all sides in the utmost anxiety, he finally came to examine his last furrow, and beheld, oh horror! the ears and tails of his poor beasts stretched upon the ground. Imagining that the thunderbolt must have struck, and the earth swallowed them up, he poured forth a most dismal lamentation over his lot, roaring aloud till the woods echoed to the sound. When he was tired he bethought himself of running home to find a pick and a spade to dig his unlucky oxen out of the earth again as quick as possible.

As he went he was met by the king and the conjuror, who inquired the occasion of his piteous lamentations. " My oxen, my poor oxen! " cried the boor, and then related all that had happened to him, entreating them to go with him to the place to witness the disaster.

The conjuror then said: "Why don't you try whether you can pull the oxen out again by the horns, or by the tail?"

With this the rustic, running back, seized one of the tails and pulling with all his might it gave way and he fell upon his back.

"Thou hast pulled thy beast's tail off," said the conjuror; "try if thou canst succeed better with his horns; if not, thou must even dig for them."

Again he pitched himself down in the attempt, while the king laughed very heartily at the sight. But as the worthy man now appeared excessively troubled at his misfortunes, the king promised him another pair of oxen; and the rustic was content.

"You have made good your boast," said the king to the conjuror, as they returned to the palace; "but now you will have to deal with a more difficult job, so muster your wit and courage. To-night you must steal my favourite charger out of his stable, and let nobody know who it is."

So, thought the king, I have trapped him at last, for he will never be able to outwit my master of the horse and all my grooms to boot. To make the matter sure the king ordered a strong guard under one of his most careful officers to be placed round the stable court. They were armed with stout battle-axes, and were enjoined every half-hour to give the word and pace alternately through the court. In the royal stables others had the like duty to perform; while the master of the horse himself was to ride the favourite steed the whole time, having been presented by the king with a gold snuff-box, from which he was to take ample pinches in order to keep himself awake, and to give signal by a loud sneeze that he was awake. He was also armed with a heavy sword with which he was to knock the thief upon the head when he approached.

The rogue first arrayed himself in the master of the bedchamber's clothes, without his leave. About midnight he proceeded to join the guards, furnished with different kinds of rich wine, saying that the king had sent him to thank them for their cheerful compliance with his orders, that the impostor was already secured, and that his master now permitted them to take a glass, and not to give the word quite so loudly as her majesty had not been able to close her eyes! He then marched into the stables, where he found the master of the horse still astride of the royal charger, busily taking snuff and sneezing every now and then.

The master of the bedchamber poured him out a sparkling glass, to drink to his majesty's health, who had sent it; and it looked quite too excellent to resist. Both master and guards then began to jest over the Arch Rogue's fate, taking, like good subjects, repeated draughts—all to his majesty's health. They soon began to experience the soporific effects; they gaped and stretched, sunk gradually upon the ground and fell asleep.

The master, by dint of fresh pinches, however, was the last to yield; but he too now blinked, stopped the horse, which he had kept upon a good walk, and said, " I am so confoundedly sleepy I can hold it no longer—take care of the charger for a moment, bind him fast to his stall,—and just keep watch."

Having uttered these words he fell like a heavy sack of corn upon the floor, and snored aloud. The mighty conjuror took his place upon the horse, gave him whip and spur, and away he galloped through the slumbering guards, through the court gates, and whistled as he went.

Early in the morning the king, eager to learn the result, hastened to his royal mews, and was a little surprised to find the whole of his guards fast asleep upon the ground; but he saw nothing of his charger.

" What is to do here? " he cried in a loud voice. " Get up! Rouse, you idle varlets! "

At last one of them, opening his eyes, cried out, " The king! the king! "

" Aye, true enough, I am here," replied his majesty, " but my favourite horse is gone. Speak! answer, on the instant! "

While the affrighted wretches, calling one to another, rubbed their heavy eyes, the king was examining the stalls once more, and stumbling over his master of the horse, turned and gave him some pretty hearty cuffs about the ears. But he only turned upon the other side, and grumbled a little:

" Let me alone, you rascal, my royal master's horse is not for you."

" Rascal! " then exclaimed the insulted king. " Do you know who it is? " and he was just about to call his attendants when he heard hasty footsteps; and the conjuror stood before him.

He was laughing very heartily, and said, " My liege, I have just returned from an airing on your noble horse, he is indeed a fine animal; but once or so I was obliged to give him the switch."

The king felt excessively vexed at the rogue's success; yet he was the more resolved to hit upon something that should bring his fox's skin into jeopardy at last.

So he thought, and the next day addressed him thus: " Thy third trial is now about to take place, and if you are clever enough to carry it through you shall not only have your life and liberty, but a handsome allowance to boot. In the other case you know your fate: now listen! This very night I command you to rob my queen consort of her bridal ring, to steal it from her finger, and let no one know the thief or the way of thieving."

Thought the king to himself, " Now at last I have caught him; for this is not possible, for how can he devise any means? Well, we shall see."

When night approached his majesty caused all the doors in the palace to be fast closed, and a guard to be set at each. He himself, instead of retiring to rest, took his station, well armed, close to the queen's couch upon an easy chair.

It was a moonlight night; and about two in the morning the king plainly heard a ladder reared up against the window, and the soft step of a man mounting it, and just as he had reached the top and looked in, the king said, "Let fall!" and the next moment the outside shutter gave way, and something fell with a terrible crash to the ground!

"Wit!" exclaimed the king, and ran down into the court, telling his consort he was going to see whether the conjuror had died of the fall! No, he was not dead, but quite as whole and brisk as ever; for he had only dropped a dead body, which he had stolen from the gallows, into the court below.

The moment he heard the king's steps upon the staircase, he replaced the ladder, mounted, and going into the chamber said in the king's voice: "Yes, he is stone dead, so you may now go quietly to sleep, only hand me here your marriage ring, it is too costly and precious to trust it, while you are asleep, in bed."

The queen, imagining it was her royal consort, instantly gave her diamond ring without the least suspicion, and in a moment the conjuror was off through the window with it on his finger. Directly after the king came back. "At last," he said, "I have indeed carried the joke too far. I have repaid him; he is lying there as dead as a door-nail; he will plague us no more!"

"I know that already; you have told me exactly the same thing twice over, though I think it a little hard that you should have required me to give up my ring."

"How came you to know anything of that?" inquired his majesty.

"How? From yourself, to be sure," replied his consort. "You informed me the conjuror was dead, and then you asked me for my marriage ring."

"I ask for the ring!" exclaimed the king. "Then I suppose you must have given it to him!" continued his majesty in a tone of great indignation, "and is it even so at last? By all the saints! this is one of the most confounded unmanageable rascals in existence. I never knew anything equal to it"; and he then informed the queen of the whole affair, though before he arrived at the conclusion of his narration he was fast asleep.

Soon after it was light in the morning, the wily conjuror made his appearance; he bowed to the earth three times before the queen and presented her with the treasure he had purloined. The king, though excessively chagrined, could not refrain laughing at this sight, adding:

" Now hear, thou king of arch rogues; I only caught a sight of you through my fingers as you were coming, or you would never have come off so well. As it is, however, let all old grudges be forgiven and forgotten. Only take up your residence for a time at my Court, taking care at the same time that you do not carry your jokes too far, in which case I might find myself compelled, if nothing worse, to withdraw my favour from you."

"LOTHAR"

CASTLE CHRISTBURG

It was many years after the famous Tir-hill fight,[1] so fatal to the then existing order of German knighthood, when the magnificent and beautiful castle of Christburg, not far from the city of Danzig, was laid in a heap of ruins, and so many noble families were compelled to seek a foreign soil, that a poor mendicant, "all tattered and torn," sought refuge under its decayed walls from the bitter blasts.

Being unacquainted with the current reports, which bestowed a legion of spirits upon the old uninhabited vaults and other remnants of its former splendour, he built himself a little hut close upon the castle site, where he intended to close his earthly pilgrimage. Daily and duly, however, he continued to practise his old profession, begging alms in the neighbourhood, and frequently returning richly laden with bread-crusts to his solitary dwelling.

About a year had passed over his head when, in one of his evening rambles among the castle ruins, he remarked a light glimmering through the bushes which overspread its time-worn walls. Indulging no notions of a supernatural kind, he stood still and peeped through an opening into the vaults below.

There in a spacious and lofty cellar he saw a large table covered with well-filled pitchers, bumpers and bowls. His mouth watered at the delicious sight. "There is neither butler nor lackey that I see," said he to himself, "and who else is likely to refuse me a good draught?"

So he quickly found out the door, which had a latch like any other door, and he opened it. Mounting a few steps he entered into the drinking-room, which was only just light enough for him to see. Other steps at the end of it led into the vaults, which were very dark, and made him a little uncomfortable; but a row of vats stood before him, and he was content.

And behold! he found he was not quite alone; a respectable old man sat at a table in one corner, apparently employed in reckoning. Supposing he had now met with the owner, the intruder saluted him, entreating that he would afford him one glass of wine.

[1] The battle took place in the beginning of the eighteenth century.

" Yes," answered the man, " drink! Take as much as will agree with you, and come again in the morning."

His mild manners took the fancy of his guest; he filled a glass of wine, which he four times repeated, and inquired as he went out if he might really venture there again.

" Yes," was the reply, " come when you please, seven times a week; but not twice a day. Be discreet and hold your tongue; you are a lucky fellow."

The beggar went and came again, regaled himself, and drank so much during the next seven days that he had cause to fear it was beginning to make inroads upon his constitution. He then bethought himself of taking only half of his daily allowance and keeping the rest for sale, with the proceeds of which he might buy fresh food and raiment.

A mendicant selling wine was rather a rare sight in the city. His purchasers laughed; all were eager to have a taste, and declaring that it was drink fit for the gods they showed him the way to the town-house, for it was too good for the palates of ordinary citizens, and the patricians could afford him a good price. So he willingly went; the alderman emptied his pitcher, and, requesting him to get more of the exact flavour, promised not to haggle with him about the price.

As often as he went with a fresh supply he obtained the same handsome reward; but towards the fifth day they began to inquire as to the source of so rich a spring. His vow of silence luckily occurred to the beggar; he began to invent a story, but as they threatened to chastise him if he did not reveal the whole truth he threw his pitcher at the alderman's head and ran as fast as his heels could carry him.

When he next paid a visit to the cellar it appeared that the old wine merchant who sat reckoning in the corner was acquainted with all that had passed.

" Look to yourself," he said to the beggar, " for they are in pursuit. In fact they have spied you out, but they will not come here again."

They had indeed caught a glimpse of him as he entered the ruins; they followed, but their reception was such that, half dead with fright, they had no inclination to proceed. For his pursuers, the moment they reached the awful precincts of the castle, beheld a solemn funeral procession, that rose like an exhalation from the ground, advancing before them, until, seized with an agony of fear, they turned back, reached the city with some difficulty, took to their beds and died.

This shocking occurrence, to which the voice of the people added fresh terrors, placed the beggar-man in perfect security. He lived unmolested in his hut, drank his wine, forgot that he was a poor

mendicant, and by comparing old and new dates thought himself a very lucky fellow.

One day there joined his company just such another miserably clad wretch as he had once been. He had been equally roughly handled in the world, had nowhere to lay his head, and his good brother, uncorrupted by his late prosperity, humanely offered him a share of his own roof. In fact he took him into partnership; they beat up the neighbouring districts in different directions, made common stock of their net proceeds, and their firm continued for a considerable time. Nothing, however, was said to the new partner respecting the wine.

But one evening returning home earlier than usual with a well-filled scrip, he heard as he came nearer loud sounds of revelry and mirth; he thought a whole party must be assembled somewhere in the vicinity. One voice, at least, was in full key; he found the door and windows open, as he drew nigh; and all this loud jubilee came from within, as if intended to be heard through the country far and wide.

He entered and found no one besides his old friend; all the sounds of revelry were his; his countenance was lighted up with joy, his eyes sparkled, he sang, and two flasks stood between his knees, one empty, and the other full of wine.

"Welcome, old boy!" he cried, as his friend came in; "sit you down here!—drink, and sing a song for once in your life!—I am richer, man, than all the Red Cross Knights in Germany that ever flourished!"

In silent astonishment the old man seated himself, drank as he was bidden, and soon began to sing. The other flask was speedily emptied; and after this good drinking bout, both fell asleep. The new partner dreamed only of the oddity of finding so rich a beverage in so poor a place; and the first question he asked himself when he awaked was, where the deuce does he get it from? His friend being still asleep he searched his pockets and examined every article in the house, to get, if possible, into the secret. All in vain! yet the next day, the next, and the next, the flask was always full; he looked, he inquired from his friend, but could get no satisfactory answer, more than, "The butler has forbidden me to say a word about it; he gave it me."

But the curious old fellow was dying to know the secret, and determined to keep a sharp look-out. With this view he had recourse to an old stratagem: just as they were going to take a glass he suddenly fell down in a fit, began to kick and make mouths; till, getting under the table, he gave it such a hearty jog as quite upset the whole drinking apparatus, and every drop of wine was lost. During the continuance of his fit he took good heed of everything his friend did; who, thinking it a good opportunity to

obtain a new supply before the old man recovered, took a key out of his pocket and went.

He was no sooner gone than up sprang his friend and glided softly after him. It was already dusk, and he had some difficulty to keep him in sight, till, with the help of the moon, he saw him enter the old castle and actually disappear down one of the vaults. He had now like to have fallen into a real fit; the ruins gleamed awfully upon his sight. Yet he had reached the entrance, his foot was upon the first step: he went on through the overhanging shrubs, and he saw his partner, nor far off, unlock a small door. He saw a light glimmering at a distance, and when the door opened it became still more visible; but he had scarcely gone a few steps farther towards the door when it slammed to, with a hideous noise, and not without catching the old inquisitive beggar a pretty sharp hit on the elbow.

At this he made a sad outcry, which echoed along the inner vaults; a figure was seen going up the steps, and the old man, in an agony of fear, leaving the skirt of his coat fast in the doorway, ran off quicker than he ever ran in his life, and only looking once round to see whether he was pursued, he at length reached the hut more dead than alive. Resuming a little courage with the return of light, and anxious for his friend's safety, the old beggar determined to visit the ruins, being now broad day, in search of him. He found the way and came to the bushes which he had passed the evening before; but he could nowhere discover the little door: the whole scene appeared to have been changed.

Thinking he must have missed the way, he wandered up and down the ruins; yet all his researches proved vain. Perceiving it was now near sunset he began to be alarmed, and set off home at full speed, the speed of an old beggar-man. He now came to the resolution of venturing no more near the fatal spot, but continued to beg honestly in the neighbourhood. A year had elapsed, and it was the eve of St. Martin's Day.

Once more, as formerly, seated upon the same spot where he had last been regaled by his lost partner, a victim to his fatal expedition, sat the old beggar-man. Twilight was already coming on, when lo! the door opened, and in walked a figure of which he had some faint recollection; he fixed his eyes upon him for a moment and ran towards him; it was his old friend.

"What, is it possible?" cried he. "Is it indeed you?"

"It is, sir, sure enough," replied the other; "the same who took you into partnership and gave you shelter here. And yet you were so very ungrateful and unreasonable as to upset all my wine in return—a plague upon your fits!—and thus compelled me to get into a horrid scrape by disobeying the butler's commands."

The strange beggar then related all he had seen, how he had

spent a whole year with the spirits of the under-world, been initiated in all their secrets, and condemned to learn the most hard and frightful lessons of their power. At length, to his great relief, he was informed that the day of his release was at hand; that he must instantly depart and acquaint the upper world with the secrets he had seen.

ANONYMOUS

MARRIED OR NOT MARRIED?

THE Countess von Werbe became a widow very young. Her husband was old and rich when he asked her in marriage. She rejected his addresses, and wept in the arms of her father. Her father laughed at her tears. He did not conceive how it was possible to reject the count, and his daughter did conceive it. Her father reckoned the estates of the count, and she reckoned his years.

She had some time before become acquainted with Herr von Welt, who had fewer estates, and fewer years over his head, danced well, talked tenderly, and loved ardently. But the count was pressing—the father severe—the Herr von Welt was poor, and the count rich. She continued to love the Herr von Welt, and gave the count her hand.

The count had no children. The gout and a cough reminded him of temperance, and he retired in the arms of Hymen to one of his estates. The young countess lived in solitude; the count coughed worse, and remained without children. His old age and his infirmities increased every day; in two years he left the world and his estates and the young wife was a widow.

She laid aside her white dresses and put on black. The countess was fair—the dark dress set off her complexion—mourning became her.

The count left her all his property: but old people are often fantastical! According to a singular condition of the will, if she married again the greatest part of the property reverted to one of his relations, living at the residence.

Herr von Welt hastened to comfort the widow. He found her beautiful, and she found him as amiable as before. He talked all day long without coughing, and she listened to him all day long without yawning. He could relate a thousand little anecdotes, and the countess was curious. He spoke of the torch of love and his own feelings, and the countess felt. He described the torments of separation, and the anxieties which had martyred him, and the countess was compassionate. He lay at her feet; protestations of his passion streamed from his lips, and his tears upon her hand,

and the countess loved; but she thought with tears on the conditions of the will. She was melancholy. It was already six weeks since the count had bid adieu to his gout for ever, and grief appeared now for the first time on the countenance of the countess.

"My dear friend," said Herr von Welt to her in the morning, "you torment yourself with doubts, and it remains in your own power to put an end to them."

"How so?" said the countess.

"You believe in the possibility," continued he, "of my ceasing to love you; you consider the band of the feelings not strong enough to withstand time; but, my dear friend, how easy it is for the hand of the priest to join ours together; you will then be tranquillised."

"Have you then forgotten the will?" said she, weeping.

"My love, the question now is only about making you easy. We will be married privately. You and I, the priest—and love will hear our oath."

"But you see, there must be a priest," said she, hastily.

"Let me manage that," said Herr von Welt. "Here in the neighbourhood lives an old man, who is borne down by poverty and close upon a century of years. He is as worthy as the times in which he was born, and as silent as the tomb which will soon receive him. He will carry our secret with him to the grave, and we will bury it in our bosoms."

The countess threw herself into his arms, and entreated him to hasten. Welt did so. The conscience of the priest was tranquillised; twilight, and a distant summer-house, concealed them from the eye of suspicion, and Welt embraced with rapture—his wife.

A year passed away; she no longer looked after him with inquietude when he rode out, and his eyes were no longer fixed on her window when he returned; she could yawn when he related, and he sometimes felt *ennui* though she was sitting by him—but they lived together. The servants had observed familiarities not warranted by friendship; yet their attachment did not appear to be ardent enough to account well for their being together. A year had made them feel secure, and they no longer paid that strict attention which they did at first to their conduct and conversation. People began to conjecture, to doubt, at last to believe, and after a time to impart their sentiments to each other.

The Count von Werbe, who was to inherit the property in default of the condition of the will being observed, was at this time out of favour with the prince, through the intrigues of his numerous creditors, and had left the residence with his wife to take refuge in the arms of nature. He had purchased the situation of grand chamberlain to the prince—had squandered his property by giving balls and *fêtes*, and destroying his health by dancing and

dancers. His wife was formerly a lady of honour—people had formerly paid homage to her charms—she was formerly surrounded by a circle of admirers, but the boundaries of this circle grew smaller, and it was now many years since she had found the residence empty and tiresome, and the taste of the times quite spoiled.

Their estate joined that of the countess. The count attended with much interest to the suspicions which were imparted to him, and hastened to the castle of the countess to pay his respects to her as a relative, and to convince himself of the truth of the opinion of his neighbours; but he did not convince himself. The countess was prepared for his visit. The Herr von Welt was tender and attentive—his eyes riveted on her. The countess showed all the cordiality of friendship and the attentions of a warmer affection. The count returned home sorrowful.

"Dear Augusta," said the count, as he entered the chamber of his wife, "our neighbours are not prudent. It is only necessary to see them both to give no credit to the tale they have amused us with. I was there two hours, and he had not the courage to come within three steps of her."

"But that proves for us," cried the countess; "he would have sat at one end of the room and she at the other."

"Not so, my love," said the count; "respect seemed to keep him at a distance. Their eyes sought each other—her countenance appeared to complain of my presence. Then the interest with which they spoke of each other! No, my love, we see each other—we talk to each other, but believe me, on my word they are not married."

"But," said the countess, "our neighbours have eyes; did you never, then, observe anything which can justify their opinion?"

"My love," replied the count, "you may suppose that I observed everything very attentively. It is not my fault if our creditors are not paid."

"Trifles often betray us," said the countess. "Reflect a little; did she not once drop her pocket-handkerchief?"

"Her pocket-handkerchief?" said the count, and considered a little; "no, but her fan fell down."

"And she picked it up again?" said the countess, quickly.

"Truly yes, she picked it up," said the count, looking at her with astonishment.

"And he was there, and suffered it?" said the countess.

The count looked thoughtful—she struck him playfully on the shoulder: "Believe me, good count, our neighbours are in the right."

"When I consider well," said the count, "it appears to me probable; she was very well dressed; her toilette was certainly a

few months behind the fashion, but we are in the country, and I was astonished at her taste."

"And he?" asked the countess.

"He held a long dissertation upon taste; he went through the whole history of fashions, from the fig-leaf of the first lady to the last gala-dress of the grand-duchess. He particularly admired the Grecian costume."

"And was she dressed like a Greek?" said the countess, quickly.

"Oh no," said the count: "she was true German—buried up to the chin."

"They are man and wife," said the countess, throwing herself into his arms.

"But her eyes," said the count, shaking his head.

"You are a keen observer," said the countess. "What proofs do you wish to have? The lover would have fallen to the ground with the fan, the husband remained quietly seated; the lover would have had eyes only to admire, the husband had time for a long conversation; the lover would have been delighted to see a German woman he admired dressed in the German fashion, and the husband praised the Greek women. My dear count, are you not aware of all that?"

The count laughed. "Well," said he, "we are invited to-morrow to our neighbour the chamberlain's; the Herr von Welt and the countess will likewise be there. In a large society we fancy ourselves less remarked, and give ourselves up more to our ease; we can therefore both observe them. You may be in the right, but her countenance, and her eyes. I have had the honour, during the last fifteen years, of presenting many married men to his royal highness, and I know mankind well! Matrimony has a peculiar look, something like despair—if you are right, my knowledge of mankind is good for nothing."

The next day all the company was assembled at the chamberlain's except the countess and Herr von Welt. The chamberlain was impatient, all eyes turned toward the road; at last a cloud of dust was observed, and then the carriage of the countess driving quickly up. She was looking out of the right window of the carriage. Welt, leaning on his arm, was looking out of the other. The lady of the grand chamberlain touched her husband and smiled; he turned round good-humouredly, and said in a low voice, "I believe you are right." The carriage stopped; Welt sprang out, the servants assisted the countess; he stood quietly by and brushed the dust from his coat. "They are man and wife," said the grand chamberlain's lady softly.

"Yes, yes, I begin to doubt my knowledge of mankind," said the count.

The countess made excuses for being so late; Welt knit his brow

in vexation. Dinner was announced; the master of the house offered his arm to the lady of the grand chamberlain. The grand chamberlain and Welt, the countess and a strange lady remained. Welt offered his arm to the strange lady, and left the countess to the grand chamberlain. His wife looked back and smiled; the grand chamberlain nodded significantly. The society was gay. Welt sat between the countess and the strange lady. He conversed with the stranger on fashion and feeling, and left the countess to be amused by the grand chamberlain. The latter smiled, his wife looked at him good-humouredly. After dinner Welt approached the countess. He talked of the influence of the body over the mind, which occasioned satiety in everything. The countess yawned. "That is the body," said she. Welt continued calmly talking, and the body of the countess yawned again.

The grand chamberlain stole up to his lady. "They are man and wife," she whispered.

"It is certain," said the grand chamberlain.

The chamberlain proposed a walk in the garden, and the company went. A narrow plank led to a fine waterfall. The grand chamberlain had brought his vertigo with him from the residence; the chamberlain was too lusty to trust himself on the plank, and the ladies were timid. Welt sought to tranquillise them. He escorted them over the plank; but he offered his services last to the countess.

The grand chamberlain stood smiling on one side, and his wife stood smiling at him from the other. It was evening, and the company hastened back to the house. The countess was behind, Welt near her. He walked on thoughtfully; she followed him fatigued.

The grand chamberlain pressed the hand of his wife. The carriages were ordered; the party separated, and hastened home.

"You are a clever woman, my love," said the grand chamberlain; "it is certain they are man and wife."

"Now, my dear," said the countess, "only take the pains to get certain proofs."

"Leave me alone," said the count. "The thing is clear, and when that is the case, there must be proofs." Accordingly he went round the neighbourhood to obtain more information; but he wanted proof, and could only procure conjectures. People had heard this, and seen that; one referred to another; and when he wanted proof, the one had said nothing, and the other had heard nothing. He came back sorrowful. "My dear," said he, "I return just as rich in conjectures, and as poor in proofs."

"Indeed!" said the countess. "Can the people yet doubt that they are married?"

"Alas! no," said the count; "but no one can prove it. How-

ever, I will try what I can do; the day after to-morrow Herr von Welt has business in the residence; I will send immediately to my lawyer. We must take advantage of the moment, for conjectures lead to nothing."

The lawyer was called; they were shut up together, and on the second day he drove to the château of the countess.

"All alone?" said the grand chamberlain, as he entered the room with an appearance of surprise.

"Herr von Welt is in town," said the countess; "he will be sorry that he was not at home when he finds that you have been here."

The grand chamberlain took a seat near her; he admired the arrangement of the house, and some pictures which were in the room.

"My husband was a connoisseur," said the countess. "The collection of paintings he has made proves his taste."

"Ah! his taste proves other things still more," said the count, smiling; and he kissed her hand. "But he was an extraordinary man; he had caprices, which he showed even to the last; his will proves that."

The countess looked at him surprised. The grand chamberlain appeared not to observe it, and continued, "So young as you are, to remain a widow can only be the caprice of an old jealous husband, who wishes to torment you after his death. The poor man forgot that the heart is very susceptible at your age."

The countess cast down her eyes and blushed.

"Herr von Welt is an old acquaintance, at least I think so," said the grand chamberlain.

"I have known him above four years," said the countess, embarrassed.

"He was remarked at Court for his talents and affability," continued the grand chamberlain, smiling, and his smile was expressive; "but the last year he has been quite lost to the Court and to the world. How is it possible for him not to forget the caprices of an old man who is dead?"

The countess was evidently more embarrassed.

"Why were you not sincere with me?" said he softly, and took her hand. "Your secret is known in the neighbourhood, why would you conceal it from me?"

The countess started up terrified. "Is it possible?" said she —and her voice faltered. "Can the old man have—Oh, count! what do you know—what is known?"

"Do you think," said the count, "that I watch my advantage so servilely?" and his tone was tender and sincere. "I will see and hear nothing. Enjoy in peace what you have dearly enough bought, by a sacrifice of two years. But, dear countess, I have

children, who may hereafter complain of my pliability and indulgence. I must therefore do something to fulfil the duty of a father. Another in my place would here require—he would lay before you proofs on which to ground his claims, but I spare your heart, and respect your secret. The friend is silent—it is the father only entreats."

"Alas!" cried the countess, and tears streamed from her eyes, "what do you require of me?"

The grand chamberlain drew a paper out of his pocket. "You know," he continued calmly, "that my property is greatly embarrassed. Your husband left you large estates, and a great fortune; I am silent on his will, of which I make no use; but this wound which I give to my interest must not continue bleeding in my children. Sign, therefore, this writing, my dear friend. You undertake therein to discharge a part of my debts, which have been occasioned by my service in the State, and your secret will ever remain concealed."

He fetched a pen. The countess in the meantime recovered her presence of mind.

"Allow me," said she, more tranquilly, "to request that you will present me the proofs on which you ground your suspicions."

"Why so?" said he, smiling, "the Government will perhaps soon communicate some to you."

"The Government?" said the countess, terrified.

"You know," continued he, "the steady course of justice; you will be cited. It is certainly only a form, but still unpleasant. You must appear and take your oath."

"Oh, heavens!" cried the countess, and her voice faltered again.

"You take your oath," said the grand chamberlain, "and remain in possession of your property."

The countess seized the pen hastily. "Your children shall lose nothing," said she, and signed. The grand chamberlain kissed the hand which returned him the paper, and went gaily to his carriage.

Herr von Welt returned the next day. "We are betrayed," said the countess, and threw herself weeping into his arms.

"Betrayed?" said he, astonished.

"The old priest must have chattered," said the countess.

"Indeed!" says Welt, "he has not spoken these nine months, for he is dead."

The countess looked confounded. She related to him the visit of the grand chamberlain, his behaviour and her signature.

"That is a deception," cried Welt, "he has taken you by surprise; but he shall not long enjoy his triumph." He hastened out of the room, ordered his horse, and rode to the grand chamberlain. The count came to meet him on the steps.

" I have a word to say to you, count," said Welt; " but I should wish it to be in private."

" A word also with you, for it is time to sit down to dinner, and you must be our guest," said the grand chamberlain affably, and led him into the room.

" Count," said Welt, " you expressed a suspicion yesterday to the countess, in which I am concerned."

" Quite right," replied the count; " people told me of these conjectures, and I repeated them to the countess."

" Count," said Welt, " by what can you prove your conjectures? "

" We will talk about it after dinner," said the grand chamberlain; " it is already on the table. Our conversing longer may occasion surprise, and you do not, of course, wish that we should furnish the people with more materials for conjectures? "

Welt bowed embarrassed. " After dinner, then," said he, and his tone was somewhat milder. The grand chamberlain opened the dining-room door, and introduced him to his wife.

Two sons of the count were at table with them. The youngest, the mother's darling, sat next her, and amused himself by getting under the table to pinch the calf of his father's leg. The count drew up his feet several times, making a wry face; but the strength of the darling seemed to increase, for he clung like a crab to the calf. The grand chamberlain at last kicked him from him with an exclamation, and the darling fell screaming at his mother's feet.

" The child grows unbearable," cried the grand chamberlain, as he rubbed the calf of his leg, which was smarting with pain; and the mother wiped the tears from the cheeks of the little one. " Poor child! " said she, " has he hurt you? "

" Go on spoiling him," said the count, " and he will one day give your heart as much pain as he has now done my calf."

" Only do not torment him," said the mother, stroking his cheeks; " he must be allowed to grow like the tree of the field. It was so that Jean Jacques wished boys to be educated."

" But he is to be a gentleman of the chamber," said the father, " and you will at last make a Jean Jacques of the boy. He will then be good for nothing at most but to be a stable-boy."

" When the children are grown up," said she coldly, " you may present them at Court; that you may understand, but do not interfere in their education. You do not wish the tender plants to wither before their time."

The grand chamberlain was silent, and looked vexed; the countess expatiated on the virtues of her children, and the cruelties of certain fathers, who had no steady principle of education.

The storm subsided by degrees, and they rose from the table.

Welt impatiently reminded the count of his promise, who conducted him into his room.

"Herr von Welt," said the grand chamberlain, as he begged him to be seated, "am I married?"

Herr von Welt looked at him with astonishment.

"I do not know what this question means, count?"

"You were not a witness at our marriage; you did not accompany us to the altar; may I be allowed to ask you by what means you know we are married?"

"I think you must be joking," said Welt; "how I know?—people have told me so."

"You consider that as a proof, then?" said the grand chamberlain quickly.

"You embarrass me," said Welt; "I knew it before I had the honour of seeing you, and my eyes convinced me."

"What have you seen, then?" asked the count.

"Oh!" said Welt, "there are certain trifles which soon discover that connection. One is more familiar together, one is not so attentive to the choice of expressions when speaking together, and sometimes one differs about the mode of education."

"Precisely so," continued the grand chamberlain, "the ardour of first love is gone by, but we live together, we bestow our attention on strangers, and leave our wives to be entertained by others: we walk onwards lost in thought, and forget that a wife is following."

"Count," said Welt embarrassed, "you describe the most minute features of the picture. But we have digressed from the main point of our conversation."

"And I think we have been constantly discussing it," said the grand chamberlain; he went to his bureau and took out a paper—"Will you have the kindness to deliver this to the countess? You may read it, Herr von Welt; it is the ratification of my promises. You see I therein renounce my claim according to the will."

"The countess will be astonished at your generosity," said Welt; "but she delivered you a contract yesterday which she requires back."

"Indeed!" said the grand chamberlain; "then I beg you to return me my writing. But, Herr von Welt, you have withdrawn yourself entirely from Court. Do you know that people have made observations upon it? Thence arise conjectures; you must have rendered a few people jealous. I give you warning, my dear friend; no one can hurt you, but they seek to revenge themselves on the countess."

"How is that possible?" said Welt, astonished.

"I am entreated to ground a complaint on the conjectures I have heard: I have not done so, but have explained my

apprehensions to the countess. The ecclesiastical court, which puts the consciences of his royal highness's subjects to proof, can put her upon her oath."

Welt looked over the paper much agitated. "I will give your renunciation to the countess," said he, getting up.

"And if she wishes her contract again," said the grand chamberlain, smiling, "it lies here amongst my papers."

"Count," said Welt, "the countess will not be behind you in generosity. Her property comes from her husband, who bore your name, and I am convinced she will be happy to appropriate a part of the property to support the splendour of his family."

He took a friendly leave of the count, who accompanied him to the hall door.

"Will you not soon travel?" said the grand chamberlain, as they descended the steps.

"Possibly very soon," said Welt; "I mean to accompany the countess, who is anxious to be in a warmer climate."

"Well, the observations you make on your journey cannot be otherwise than instructive," said the grand chamberlain. "But, my dear friend," he continued, "when in London or at Madrid you see a man sitting opposite a lady, and the lady lets fall her fan, and he does not stoop to pick it up, or when he speaks learnedly, and the lady yawns—and they yawn at Madrid as well as here—then believe me, they are man—and wife."

Herr von Welt threw himself on his horse.

"Ride fast," said the count, laughing; "make haste home; a gallop will confound the neighbours, who always walk their horses home to their wives."

Welt laughed, and spurred his animal. The grand chamberlain soon after satisfied his creditors, and returned to Court.

ANONYMOUS

THE SENATOR OF BREMEN

A POPULAR TRADITION

One summer evening, in the year 1749, the family of Mr. Sebaldus Beerlein, senator of the free imperial city of Bremen, were seated together, whiling away the hour between eight and nine in conversation, and the juniors amusing themselves with various innocent games. The apartment which they were in was spacious, panelled, according to the custom of that time, with carved woodwork, and decorated with oil-paintings of some value, which Mr. Sebaldus had picked up in his travels in Holland. His aged grandmother was seated at the window, in a chair covered with leather, embossed with flowers of gold, looking, as usual, at the steeples of the distant churches, tinged with the radiance of sunset. She hummed at the same time to herself an old hymn of Paul Gerherd's, which treats of the repose of the godly after death, and the happiness of those who have fought the good fight, and are delivered from all the trials and tribulations of this mortal life. She numbered full eighty years, and so she had good reason to hum such a hymn. Catherine, the senator's wife, a still young and comely woman, of the most respectable family of Ruhberg of Hildesheim, sat not far from the window at a small table, playing a game at lansquenet with her nephew Ruhberg, copying-clerk to the senate, an almost boyish-looking young man. She mistook the cards in the twilight; the youth took advantage of this, and purposely cheated his aunt, and she reproved him with good-humoured severity for his knavish tricks. A group of children were sitting together in the middle of the room, and Sigismunda, the eldest daughter, twelve years old, was telling her brothers and sisters, in a low tone, a long story, to which they listened in silent attention. Theobald Ahlevert, an old and faithful servant of the family, was standing at the corner of the stove, calculating the last week's receipts from a little shop which his wife kept, and, as he had reason to apprehend, not to the best account. Thus each of the members of the family was engaged his own way, and not attending to what the others were about.

Mr. Sebaldus Beerlein himself was sitting on the sofa, with a

hand in his waistcoat-pocket, and his head propped by the other; he looked straight before him, listening with pleasure to the playful tones of his wife and the soft whispering voice of his daughter, and now and then casting a glance at the dark form of his grandmother, whose shaking head and sharply-formed, noble features were defined upon the evening sky. Such moments are of great value to the father of a family. He takes a survey of his past life; he thinks of all the comforts and blessings that Providence has bestowed on him, and he forms plans for the further improvement of his circumstances, for the sake of those who are dearest to his heart.

The clock of the neighbouring church now struck nine. As the sound of the last stroke died away, the senator rose, took his hat and cane, and hastily left the room.

"Sebald," cried his wife, "art thou going to the counting-house? Shall a light be brought down to thee?"

The senator gave no answer. They heard him going down the stairs, and presently the house-door shutting heavily after him.

"Where can he be going to?" asked the grandmother.

"Indeed, I don't know," replied his wife. "He meant to spend the evening with us. Something must have suddenly occurred to him."

The old lady shook her head. A light was brought, and the family sat down at the round-table to their simple supper. A place was left for the master of the house, as everybody felt thoroughly convinced that he would presently return. The quarter chimed, then the half-hour, then three-quarters, and at last the clock struck ten, and still he had not come back. Theobald was sent to the vintner's over the way, to inquire whether the senator might not have turned in there and met with friends who had detained him; but he came back, saying that the vintner assured him he had not seen his master. Catherine joked about this sudden disappearance of her husband, but nobody joined in her mirth, especially as the venerable grandmother assumed so serious a look. For some days past she had felt unwell.

"It is not right of him to go just now," said she; "I am liable to be called from one moment to another; and it would grieve me much not to see him once more."

Catherine scolded the grandmother for this expression, and told her that she ought not to talk in that manner. The old lady said her prayers, and Catherine led her to her chamber.

The children were put to bed, too; young Ruhberg retired, and Catherine was left by herself. She took up some work, and seated herself near the candle, resolving not to go to bed till her husband came in.

It struck eleven, it struck twelve, and not a footfall was heard out of doors. The streets were deserted and silent: the watchman's

horn was heard at a great distance; and from a curtained back-window of a neighbouring house sounded the low mournful tones of women singing while they watched with a corpse. The sky was overcast, and here and there a few solitary stars, so few, that Catherine could count them, peeped forth from between the clouds. She stood at the window, and she made sure that every shadow which glided along either side of the street was her husband coming home at last; but still he came not. When she returned to her work at the table, she was seized with despondency and alarm. She now bethought her that it was not Sebald's way to go out so suddenly without saying a word, and to stay out so late. If he had changed his mind, and been obliged to go out that evening, he would surely have said a word to that effect to his wife, who was sitting not far from him. Never did he go out for a single hour without acquainting her, and desiring her to save his supper for him; and now he was away the whole night! She turned over in her mind his behaviour during the day; uneasy as she was, she fancied that it had not been altogether as usual; but on closer reflection she could not adduce any particular circumstance. The anxious wife tried to recollect whether any petty jar had arisen between them, but she soon said to herself, "How could I forget a quarrel so serious as to drive a husband away from his wife? Besides, it was not Sebald's disposition to bear such a violent grudge."

Catherine's thoughts then turned to his circumstances; but, as far as she knew, these were prosperous: indeed, had they been ever so deranged, the senator, a man universally beloved and esteemed, would have had no need to abscond by night on that account, for he had friends and wealthy relations who took an interest in his welfare.

Amid these musings, day dawned, and Catherine extinguished her lamp. Weary as she was, sleep kept aloof from her eyes. By degrees the family began to stir, doors opened, and the short dry cough of the grandmother gave notice that she was awake. The children came, and Catherine said not a word to them or to the old lady about the absence of her husband. But she could not long conceal it. People came upon business; the messenger of the senate wanted him; friends asked to see him; and at last she was obliged to confess that she knew not where her husband was. A day was suffered to pass; and then it was publicly reported in the city that Senator Beerlein had disappeared, and nobody knew what had become of him. Some now pretended that a man's hat and stick had been found on the bank of the river; others declared that a report of fire-arms had been heard at night in a neighbouring wood, and it was whispered that the corpse of the suicide had been carried very early in the morning to the city by charcoal-burners, secretly hired for the purpose. Still more extraordinary rumours

were circulated: it was alleged that Mr. Beerlein had been conducted by an escort over the frontier, to be punished for some crime suddenly discovered in a neighbouring country. It is easy to conceive what Catherine and her family must have suffered when they heard these reports. The poor forlorn woman still believed that her husband would come back daily, hourly—but she was disappointed. A month passed away, two months, three months, and not a trace of the senator was to be discovered. Advertisements in the newspapers proved fruitless; and private inquiries indefatigably prosecuted were equally unavailing. The man was as completely lost as if he had sunk into the earth. Nobody had seen him go out at the door, nobody had observed him in the street; minutely as his dress, face, and figure were described, nowhere had such a person been seen in any of the neighbouring places.

Three years had elapsed, and the lost senator had ceased to be talked of, when, late one evening, likewise in the middle of summer, a man knocked at the door of Beerlein's house. He looked pale and fatigued. He was asked what he wanted. The stranger was evidently astonished at this question.

" Who are you? " said he to the young man who opened the door. " What brings you into my house? "

" Your house! " exclaimed the youth, scrutinising the interrogator from head to foot. " This house belongs to Mr. Van Peters, the wine-merchant, and I am his clerk."

" Van Peters! " exclaimed the stranger. " What a silly oaf you must be to crack such a stupid joke! As if I did not know where the wine-merchant lives, and where my own house is! "

With these words he pushed the young fellow roughly aside, and ascended the well-known staircase. He went along the passage; here he saw furniture and pictures that were strange to him. He was about to open the door of the sitting-room, when bursts of obstreperous laughter, the clang of glasses, and voices of men in loud disputation met his ear.

" Is it possible? " said he to himself; " has Catherine company —and especially such noisy company as this? "

He opened the door gently, and was thrilled with horror on seeing a number of drunken faces around a public-house table. The apartment, which used to be kept so neat, so clean, and so comfortable, looked dirty, and was filled with tobacco-smoke. The wainscot was damaged, and here and there gone from the wall. The chair at the window, where his grandmother was accustomed to sit, was occupied by a sleeping " mountain of gross flesh." But the evening sun shone, as it did when he was there last, through the windows, and its golden radiance cut the returned senator to the heart like a dagger. He stood upon the threshold of his own room; he sought the dear objects whom he had left there but an

hour before, as he thought, and how was all so frightfully changed, as in the wild vagaries of an extravagant dream! The poor man rubbed his forehead, he shut his eyes, and opened them again, to convince himself that he was not mistaken, and tottered like one who is on the point of swooning. The noisy revellers, on perceiving him, laughed aloud at the pale stranger for coming into a public-house when he seemed to be already intoxicated.

" Good Heavens! " all at once exclaimed the landlord; " why, it is the lost senator! "

At this exclamation the guests were seized with a panic, set down their glasses, and stared at the door, as though they had seen a spectre. The stranger advanced and seated himself at the end of one of the benches. Those who occupied it moved as far from him as they could. The landlord alone had the courage to go up to him.

" Mr. Senator," cried he, " where have you been? For these three years search has been made for you to no purpose."

" Three years! " repeated Beerlein, staring at the landlord.

" This house," continued the other, " is no longer yours. Your widow—your wife, I would say—I beg your pardon, I am talking to you as if you were dead—sold it to me in the second year, as you did not come back, and now lives in a small town in the neighbourhood."

" And my grandmother? " asked Beerlein.

" She died a few weeks after your disappearance."

" And my children? "

" Dead, too. A disease which made great havoc in our good city last year carried them off."

At these answers, the head of the unfortunate senator drooped lower and lower; no tone of horror or of grief escaped him; but his whole frame denoted heart-breaking and unutterable anguish. He left the room as quietly as he had entered it. The landlord followed him, stopped him on the stairs, and asked in a loud and sharp voice, " But where have you been all this time, neighbour? "

" Ask me not," replied the wretched man. " God has been pleased to try me in a wonderful way. I feel that I shall die."

With these words he fell into a deep swoon. Care was taken to convey him to his wife, and one may conceive the fright and joy of Catherine when she saw her long-lost husband return. She received him in her widow's weeds, which she put off immediately, but only to resume them in a few weeks, and this time with sufficient occasion, for Mr. Sebaldus Beerlein departed this life, as he had foretold, with pious resignation; but before he died he communicated to the clergyman who attended him the extraordinary circumstances of his absence, and this document is still preserved by the family. It is attested and signed by several witnesses living at

the time, who were well acquainted with the senator before his disappearance, and who saw him return, and the seal of the city authorities was affixed to it. This narrative was, in substance, as follows:

"On Trinity Sunday, in the year 1749," relates the senator, "between eight and nine in the evening, I was sitting quietly, and occupied with the most pleasing thoughts about my family, which was collected around me, when I distinctly heard a rap at the door. I took no notice of it, concluding that Ahlevert, my servant, who was close to the door, would see who was there, or that the person who had knocked would come in, when he found his signal disregarded. Instead of that, however, the knocking was thrice repeated, and very loud. I was surprised that not a creature in the room seemed to hear it: all quietly kept their seats. All at once it was as if a voice said to me, 'Rise, take thy hat and cane and go.'

"I strove to silence this extraordinary inward injunction, but was seized with such an anxiety, oppression, and faintness of heart, as if I had been ever so ill. This painful sensation became at last so unbearable that I was forced to take up my hat and stick and to go to the door.

"When I was in the passage, I there found a man who eyed me with steadfast look, and again the words sounded in my ears, 'Come, follow me.'

"I knew not the man, neither did I know what he wanted with me; but I felt that from the moment I had crossed the threshold of my room he had power over me, and I followed him.

"We descended the back stairs and went through a passage in the next house, of the existence of which I had never before been aware. It was vaulted, and, as far as I can recollect, casks and empty chests were piled against its dark walls. It became lower and lower, so that at last I was obliged to advance stooping after my guide, who went just before me. We came to a dark water, which I took to be a covered canal: the water looked black and unnatural. A couple of crazy planks, which served for a bridge, swayed much as I was passing over them; but my guide moved light as a feather and without the slightest noise over this dangerous crossing.

"We got at last into the open air, and I saw the starry firmament above us. The evening red still glowed in the west, and I recollect that, on looking back, I distinctly saw the steeple of our principal church; everything else seemed to be enveloped, as it were, in mist. We now came to a plain, extending farther than the eye could reach, and which appeared absolutely strange to me. Not a tree, not a hut, not a road was to be seen. The ground was

covered with dried or singed grass, as if a vast fire had lately raged there.

"I made this remark to my guide, asking at the same time whither he was leading me. Without answering, he signified, by a silent gesture, that we must proceed. Accordingly, without exchanging a word, we pursued our course together over the dead level of the heath. The last tinge of the evening red disappeared; a fog shrouded the face of heaven, so that earth and sky seemed to be covered with one uniform lead-coloured veil. I cannot describe to you the awful and soul-depressing effect of this solitude. How grateful to my ear would have been the slightest sound of life! We heard not even our own footfalls on the soft ground. From time to time a cool breeze blew over the plain, but it refreshed me not, for it wafted with it an intolerable smell of mould.

"Having proceeded in this manner for about half an hour, I perceived a house standing quite alone upon the plain, and the windows of which were brilliantly lighted up. It was in that sort of style in which palaces are built; pillars supported the roof, and the edifice was decorated with magnificent flights of steps, rich coats-of-arms, and gilt statues. My companion beckoned me to enter. I represented to him that I knew not either the house or its owner.

"'Thou wilt learn to know him,' he replied; 'but beware of putting a single question either to him or to those about him concerning what thou shalt there see. Silent as thou camest must thou go again, and impress upon thy memory what thou seest.'

"With these words he opened the door of a large magnificent saloon, along the sides of which I saw by the light of a thousand tapers a large company sitting in full dress. When I entered, every eye was turned upon me. The company consisted of gentlemen of quality and ladies of extraordinary beauty; but I knew none of them. They were faces which I had never seen in all my life. My companion, who stopped in a respectful attitude at the door, motioned me to approach the company. I did so, though I felt abashed, and they replied to my salutation with a formal but not unfriendly obeisance; for every one seemed to be wholly occupied with himself or his neighbour, and to take no further notice of me. I had time for observation, and I soon remarked that all these beautiful women had red cords round their necks, which were white as alabaster, and that the gentlemen wore the same mark over their cravats. Finding that I was permitted to walk about where I pleased, I went up to a card-table at the window, about which four grave gentlemen were assembled. They looked cold and indifferent; sleep seemed to weigh down their eyes: their clothes were most splendidly embroidered with gold, and broad ribbons of orders crossed their bosoms. They, too, had the distinctive red band round the neck; but what startled me more was to see that the

cards with which they were playing were stained with blood.

"I turned shuddering away, and went into an adjoining apartment. It was fitted up still more superbly than the saloon, and hung with red velvet. On a sofa I saw a man who was taking a nap; his head drooped upon his bosom; but he, too, had the red band round his neck. Casting my eyes upon the floor, I perceived with horror a track of blood, which led to the next room. I followed it, and found a second apartment, but not a creature in it. The lights burned dimly, and a number of musical instruments huddled together in one corner indicated that they had been or were to be used to play to dancing. But not a musician was to be seen, and the profoundest silence prevailed. A door of immense magnitude occupied the farther side of this apartment. It was shut and surrounded with costly gilding. The traces of blood led to this door; but, in spite of all my efforts to open it, I could not stir the lock. Apprehensive lest the noise which I made might bring the company to me, I desisted from further attempts. Over the door was inscribed in large black figures '1789.' This number has deeply impressed itself upon my mind, as well as the track of blood which led to the mysterious apartment.

"I know that I fell into a reverie about these things, and a kind of stupor came over me, and made me sit down in a chair in a corner of the saloon. How long I might have sat there I cannot tell: when I woke up from my musing, I heard a clock strike one, and at the same time a great bustle in the saloon. I rose immediately and hastened through the apartments to look for my guide. He was still standing there waiting for me. We quitted the saloon and the house forthwith. I was again upon the solitary heath, and my companion walking mutely by my side. In this manner we arrived at the skirts of the city, where he took leave of me with a silent bow. I felt faint and ready to die. I had scarcely strength to reach the city, and I rejoiced to find myself again in the well-known streets. When I once more heard the noise usual in them, and human voices, my heart seemed to revive. The recollection of the ghostlike company, with its fearful mark, gradually became less vivid, but that prophetic number was constantly before my eyes, and will continue to haunt them as long as I live; for it is but too certain that the Lord hath caused me to see a wonderful vision."

Need we say that the import of this vision, or whatever it may be called, was fully explained by the French Revolution which broke out just forty years afterwards? About that time appeared a tract in German, with this title, "Wonderful and True History of the lost Senator of Bremen—how by the special permission of God he foresaw future Times and their Doings." Upon that publication the above tradition is founded.

ANONYMOUS

UNCLE'S WILL

Mr. Heimal, an old rich miser, and an odd fellow, felt that his hour was come, and therefore wrote to Adolphus, a very poor nephew, whom he always before neglected, to ask him to visit him, promising to make him heir to all his possessions. Adolphus lost no time, but travelled night and day, and reaching the little village, the residence of his uncle, early on the fifth morning, went to the Violet, the only inn of the place, in order to dress himself better, and to make inquiries about his uncle. The landlord answered, shrugging up his shoulders:

"According to all appearances Mr. Heimal was near his end. Since Wednesday he was sensible only for a few hours each day, and is likely, says Mr. Schneidab, the village barber and physician, to depart this evening. Since the peace, instead of the better times we hoped for, a pestilence rages here, which even destroys the child in the mother's womb. My cousin, the smith, who was so strong that he might have been used like a beam to force open the church door, is gone to God yesterday evening; and Schneidab, who is not easily frightened, begins to lose courage. He believes it to be a *radical* pestilence, intended only for the benefit of the sexton, who, like an enchanted executioner, sees three dead bodies before him instead of one, and cannot heave in and out fast enough."

Adolphus asked more particulars of his uncle. "You will find with your uncle a faithful old housekeeper, and Albertina, an orphan, who lost her left eye by a ball entering the window in a skirmish, but who continues to set both young and old in a flame with the right, as if it were a burning-glass, and this without wishing it, for *Tinchen* is a perfect example."

With a heart beating so that it might be heard, Adolphus entered his uncle's house, and met Albertina. Her noble form, and her remaining burning-glass, caused the loss of the other to be overlooked. The gentle goodness of her spirit played about her face, and seemed independent of its form, though in truth it was, with the exception of the eye, beautiful. "Mr. Adolphus," repeated Albertina, as he named himself, "I will announce you immediately; you are expected impatiently, and will be heartily welcome."

"Thank Heaven," said the deserving heir to himself. To her

he said some flattering words as she disappeared, and then prayed that his uncle's heart might be favourably disposed towards him. Albertina opened the door and bade him enter. In a moment he was at the bedside.

Old Heimal was perfectly sensible: he thanked Adolphus in a friendly way; praised his blooming appearance; assured him he had inquired after him, and heard nothing of him but what was good, and therefore had made him his heir. Adolphus stammered forth his earnest thanks.

"Not too soon, not too soon," said the other; "it is with conditions: hear them first. I am to be buried in the churchyard here, and you will receive the interest of eighty thousand thalers if you promise the magistrate to repeat piously the Lord's Prayer once a day over my grave till the end of your life. If you fail once, the informer is to receive a fourth part of the inheritance, and the remainder is to go to the hospital, the guardian of which will keep a good look-out that you perform your vow. Nothing but a serious disease, testified by two surgeons, is to excuse you from this duty. The testament lies ready with the magistrate; take time, therefore, to think, for every condition is, early or late, a clog on the enjoyment of that good with which it is combined. 'Why did my uncle curse me,' you will say, 'with this condition? Why did he poison to me the wine he was no longer able to drink himself?' I answer, justice demands that my property should be expended for the benefit of the town in which I gained it—in which I went to school and grew up to manhood. On the boundary of the dominion of death you shall be at least reminded once a day to raise your thoughts to the Giver of all good; and I wish to save the soul of my heir from the rock of worldly perdition. Go, my son; I am weak."

Albertina had remained in the room by the command of the old man, and now accompanied Adolphus to the door. In the confusion of his feelings he seized her hand and asked what she advised. She blushed, and answered:

"I cannot believe that you will be guided in so important a matter by the advice of an ignorant girl."

"Oh yes!" answered he; "your situation here makes you a friend, and the good sense of your answer belies your pretended ignorance. The powers of fate announce their decrees with pleasure by the mouth of innocent maidens."

She replied, "Turn to our Father in heaven; prayer brings power and knowledge, and we then select, as if by inspiration, that which is best."

Adolphus left her with a grateful squeeze of the hand. He was disposed to follow her advice, but his wishes were earthly.

"Eighty thousand thalers," said he, "or rather the interest of

this sum, is in truth a key to earth's heaven: but what is the price? The condition separates me for ever from all which can sweeten life or render it lovely. Suppose I might with swift horses reach the capital for a moment to strengthen my mind in the circle of beauty and intelligence, it can only be for a moment, and like a solitary moonbeam through the darkness of a wintry night; and I lose all if any accident happens to me on the road. Is there a bitterer cup than this eternal monotony—this seeing always the same faces, part expressing vulgarity, part signifying a mixture of rudeness and knowledge even more intolerable than vulgarity? Can anything be worse than to live with people who spy out every morning what I mean to nourish my body with at mid-day, and who treat every deviation from their own customs worse than the Inquisition treats heretics? Yet even here I may find friends, hearts allied to mine, though different in age, situation, and habits. But how soon is conversation exhausted! How does the daily return of the same materials diminish the charms of society! Whatever happens to the town falls on me as part of it. The inheritance makes me like one of its towers; and when I will fall sick, Mr. Schneidab, the village barber, will hasten, as accoucheur sent by the fates, to deliver me into another world."

In this manner, till late in the evening, did Adolphus weigh his situation; and as he was going to bed, Albertina came to announce the sudden death of his uncle. This news made him pass a sleepless night, and at times to be almost out of his senses. He imagined that the amiable Albertina glided into his chamber and begged earnestly of him to be pleased with the little town, that she delighted him very much, that she made his staying there the condition of obtaining her favour, and that she offered him her sweet mouth to seal the contract with a kiss. He then imagined himself, with her assistance, counting heaps of ducats, and he was full of gratitude for the golden shower and for the lovely bride. He embraced her with one arm and lifted a sack of thalers in the other. A cry of fire awoke him—the warm living image was fled, and the landlady burst into the room to save her wardrobe, which was safely stowed in the best chamber used for guests. The cry of fire ran through the house, for not one who could breathe but joined in the alarm.

Adolphus sprang out of bed, descended to the street, and saw the house of his departed uncle in flames. He reached it just as Albertina came out with a box of valuables, which she gave him as his property, and then hastened back to secure her own, and came not again. Adolphus felt how much he was indebted to her, and pressing through the burning house, found her in a courtyard clinging to a tree, which protected her for a moment from the flames.

"I am lost," said she; "save yourself."

He, however, sprang to her, the flames, as it were, following him, and making his retreat impossible. The hot air already made it difficult to breathe, when he discovered that, by climbing the tree, he might escape over the wall. With the arm of love strengthened by fear, he dragged the maiden up the stem and along one of the overhanging branches, and then dropped her safely on the opposite side of the wall and jumped after her. Here they stood in a neighbouring garden, and first thanked God for their escape. Albertina then extinguished the sparks on his waistcoat; he kissed her as he had done in his dream, and then led her to a place of safety.

When the fire was extinguished, which did not take place till the house was consumed, Adolphus returned to bed and slept nearly as sound as his uncle, whose corporeal part had been reduced by fire to a heap of ashes. Albertina had found it, and had secretly conveyed it away. In the morning his body was sought, for the will made it necessary to have it buried; but all in vain; not a bone was to be discovered. Albertina, however, sent in secret a casket to Adolphus, and wrote with it:

" If the accompanying casket serves, as I hope, to free my noble assistant from the heavy conditions which our departed friend imposed upon his heir, this latter will then only pray with more fervour over the ashes of his benefactor, which now lie in his hands."

Adolphus blessed in his heart her ingenuity, then went to the magistrate, who was full of thought, and knew not whom he could bury in Heimal's place—for a grave they must have, to fulfil the conditions of his will. Adolphus, however, said:

" You undoubtedly know beforehand what I mean to say to your worship. You know that a nonentity cannot be buried, and that I cannot be bound to pray over a grave where my uncle is not entombed; and, at the same time, his testament, making me his heir, remains perfectly valid. A process would evidently last longer than your life, and probably not be finished before the day of judgment. Far be it from me, however, to wish to injure this esteemed pleasant town, the cradle of my good fortune. I therefore resign in favour of its hospital a third part of the property left by my uncle. For this, however, you will give me permission to send to your good wife some of the newest fashions from the city, where I mean to take up my residence."

Seldom has a treaty been sooner ratified than this was; and the heir got away with difficulty from the gratitude of the magistrate, to seek out Albertina. She struggled against the embraces with which, in his joy, he overwhelmed her: they might be the mode in the city—here they were quite unheard of; but Adolphus spoke with a seducing tongue, and on a subject not usually ungrateful to a maiden's ear. She pretended, indeed, not to believe him, as if

she regarded it as impossible, with the failure of her eye, to please a man who was so entirely without fault, and she concealed her wishes with maidenlike excuses. The gay people of the little town, however, were soon afterwards invited to Adolphus's marriage-feast. He placed, without the knowledge of the bride, the casket with the ashes of the now blessed uncle under the marriage-bed, and was thus enabled to offer the promised prayers daily with the greatest conveniency.

ANONYMOUS

WHO COULD HAVE BELIEVED IT?

THERE lived in Vienna a young man of rank and fortune, who bore a strong resemblance to many other young men of that and every city, for he was a dupe to all the follies of fashion and high life. He combined a flexible heart with a handsome person; it had cost his mother a great deal of trouble to make him what is called a *puppy*; but, by indefatigable diligence, she had at last effected her purpose. All the ladies, consequently, loved him, and he loved them all in return. It has been said that once or twice his attachments have been even of more than a month's duration, but never did he impose any constraint upon himself or the object of his affection by an irksome fidelity. He possessed the nicest powers of perception, whenever any word or look summoned him to victory; but he always had the good manners to pay every attention to the clock, when it announced the hour of parting.

With these qualifications he was certain of success with the ladies. He paid his devoirs to all, enjoyed all, and was at last tired of all. In one of his moments of torpid satiety our hero had returned home before supper. Happy is he who feels the time least oppressive when at home—he belongs to the better kind of men. Our young count threw himself upon the sofa, stretched his limbs, yawned, and so forth. Suddenly it occurred to him that he was married. No wonder that we should have forgotten it, since he himself only just now recollected it. "Apropos," said he, and rung the bell. A servant entered.

"Go to your mistress and ask if I may have the pleasure of seeing her."

The servant listened attentively, not believing the testimony of his own ears. The count repeated his orders, which the servant at length obeyed, shaking his head as he went. The countess was the amiable daughter of a country gentleman—she was a flower which, from the pressure of the Court atmosphere, drooped, but did not quite wither; to avoid *ennui* she had no resource but to swim with the tide of high life. She and her husband sometimes met—they never avoided, nor ever courted each other's society. Before marriage they had seen little of each other, and after it they had no

time to devote to such an employment. There were people enough who spared the count the trouble of admiring his wife's perfections, and if they made no impression on her heart, they at least gratified her vanity.

Her husband's message was delivered to her at a moment when her state of mind was much the same as his. She knew not what to think of this unexpected visit; she replied, however, that she should be happy to see him. He entered—hoped he was not troublesome—took a chair—made remarks on the weather—and recounted the news of the day. The conversation, as far as related to the subjects of it, was quite common, but his vivacity and Amelia's genius inspired it with interest. The time passed they knew not how: the count looked at his watch—was surprised to find it so late, and requested permission to sup with his wife.

"With all my heart," replied Amelia, "if you can be content with my homely fare."

Supper was brought—they ate, and were merry, without being noisy. This calm pleasure possessed to them the charm of novelty; they were both pleasant without wishing to appear so, as is generally the case with most people. They were quite new acquaintances—the hours flew swiftly away, and the time for retiring to rest being arrived, the count took leave of the countess, highly pleased with his visit.

The next day he was invited to a concert, and did not learn till it was late that, one of the virtuosos being ill, the concert was deferred. How was he to pass the tedious evening? He inquired, as he passed, after his wife, and was informed she was somewhat indisposed.

"Well," thought he, "common civility requires that I should wait upon her, and ask her personally how she does."

He sent a message, requesting that he might be allowed to sit with her till supper, and was very politely received. He was cheerful, lively, and gallant. The supper hour arrived, and this time Amelia begged him to stay. He had been invited to a casino party after the concert, notwithstanding which he remained with his wife, and their conversation was quite as pleasant and less reserved than that of the preceding visit.

"Do you know," said Amelia, "that the party to which you were invited would find a little trouble in discovering *the cause* of your absence?"

He smiled, and paused for a few moments. "I must tell you something in confidence," began he at length, while he was playing with his fork, "something which you will perhaps think rather candid than gallant; you cannot imagine how much you are improved since your marriage."

"*My* marriage!" answered Amelia, in a jocose tone; "I believe it took place about the same time as your own."

"Very true, my lady," replied he, "but it is inconceivable how so happy an alteration can have taken place in you. At that time —pardon me—you had so much rustic bashfulness, it is scarce possible to recognise you. Your genius is no longer the same; even your features are much improved."

"Well, my lord," replied the countess, "without wishing to return the compliment, all that you have said of me I thought of you. But upon my word," added she, "it is well that no one hears us; for it almost seems as if we were making love."

The dialogue continued long in the same style, till Amelia at length looked at her watch, and in a fascinating tone remarked that it was late. The count arose unwillingly, slowly took his leave, and as slowly retired to the door—suddenly he again turned round.

"My lady," said he, "I find it very tedious to breakfast alone—may I be allowed to take my chocolate with you?"

"If you please," answered Amelia; and they parted, still more pleased with each other.

The next morning it occurred to the count that these frequent visits *to his wife* might give rise to scandalous reports. He therefore desired his valet not to mention the circumstance to any one. He then put on an elegant morning-gown, and went softly over to Amelia.

Amelia had just risen in the most cheerful humour. The bloom upon her cheek rivalled the blush of morning. She was animated and witty—in short, she was enchanting; and her husband, in an hour, discovered how much pleasanter it was to breakfast in company than to sit alone, and opposite a glass, gazing at his own person, and looking into his yawning mouth.

"Why don't you come here every day," said Amelia, "if my company is pleasant to you?" He answered that he feared his presence might prevent the visits of others.

"I shall miss no one," replied she, "as long as you indemnify me by your society."

"Upon my word," said the count, "I have more than once wished that I was not your ladyship's husband."

"Why so?" demanded Amelia.

"That I might be allowed to tell you," returned he, "how much I love you."

"Oh! tell me so, I beg," cried she, "if only for the sake of novelty."

"Fear not," answered the count; "I hope, my lady, I shall never so far forget myself; but we have had, I think, two very agreeable *tête-à-têtes* at supper—how if you were this evening to allow me a third?"

"With all my heart," answered the countess. The appointment was on both sides exactly adhered to. Their conversation was this time less lively, less brilliant—they gazed at each other oftener, and spoke less; the heart began to assert its influence, and even arrived so far that they once, during a pause, involuntarily squeezed each other's hand across the table, although the servants were still in the room. *Who could have believed it?*

Amelia very plainly perceived that it was late, but she did not look at her watch. Her husband made not the smallest effort to depart;—he complained that he was somewhat tired, but not sleepy. In a word, from this day they parted in the morning instead of midnight, because they were then both ready to breakfast together.

The count, enchanted with his new conquest, eloped with Amelia into the country, where they, with astonishment, discovered that the theatre of nature, and the concert of the nightingales, surpassed all other theatres and concerts. They at first thought of staying only a few days—every morning they intended to depart, and every evening they changed their intentions. When autumn, however, approached, they returned to Vienna. The same evening they went to the play, and our hero had the courage to sit in the *same box* with Amelia.

Who could have believed it? To such a dreadful extent may a man be led by one thoughtless step. Ye happy husbands in high life, take warning by the mournful example of our count!

FRANZ VON GAUDY

1800–1840

ANTONELLO THE GONDOLIER

It is just half a century since I closed the eyes of my good father—the best of comrades, the fondest of husbands, the most honest Venetian of his time. Ah, if you had known my father you would have acknowledged him the hardiest, boldest fellow in the Republic, the cleverest mandoline-player, the best singer of Tasso, the smartest gondolier whose oars ever lashed to foam the waters of the Canalazzo. All this must be my excuse for rescuing from the oblivion of the fleeting years the fragment of his life I now relate.

My father felt his end approaching. With closed eyes he lay on a couch stuffed with maize-straw, a rosary in his wrinkled hands, and his pale lips moving in silent prayer. A death-like stillness filled the room, broken only by the sobs of wife and children. The rays of the evening sun burst through the vine-espalier that grew round our home; and over the face of the dying passed now patches of rosy light, and now the shadows of the broad leaves. Presently he opened the large, black, deeply-sunken eyes once more, looked slowly round as if to make sure that we were all there, and then began wearily and with difficulty to speak.

"For years, now," he said, "I have been wanting to make you the confidants of a strange, almost incredible, event which happened to me in my youth. I put it off from day to day for one reason or another, but I put it off too long. Now, I know not whether the time that is left me suffices for the telling of this long-guarded secret. Listen, however—but first swear on this dying hand that no word of the secret shall pass your lips till fifty years have gone. The heir of a great and powerful family has been involved in the destiny of so humble a man as myself—and the Tribunal of the Inquisition was compelled to intervene. An unguarded word may expose you to the vengeance of an undisciplined and powerful nobility, or to the severity of the legal authorities. Swear, therefore, a silence of fifty years!"

We obeyed the last command of our father; we laid our hands in

his, and pronounced the binding oath. We have kept it faithfully —my mother and sisters till their death; I, the last surviving, till the period assigned has expired, and the time arrived when I have to fear neither the vengeance of the nobles nor the tyranny of the Council of Ten; but to the point.

" It was at three o'clock on a sultry summer afternoon "—began my father—" that I sat myself down at the base of the granite pillar which supports the saintly Teodoro, and stretched my lazy limbs on the stone slabs below it. I fell to counting, with sleepy eyes, the pillars of the Doge's Palace, up and down, then down and up; miscounted them, and tried again—feeling my eyelids becoming heavier with each number I told. The footsteps of the guard holding watch under the colonnade fell ever duller and fainter on my ears. Now and then one of the pigeons from the Place of St. Mark whirred past over my head, hastening to seek refuge from the glowing heat under the eaves of the church. It was so still that I could hear the little wavelets as they broke against the bows of the gondolas. All the world was having its siesta, and I was in a good way to follow suit, when the shout, ' Hi! Antonello, up there! A league's row on the canal! ' startled me out of my doze.

" The shout proceeded from Count Orazio Memmo—the most amiable good-for-nothing in all Venice. Three-and-twenty years old, tall and slim, a well-cut pale face, with the blackest and most brilliant eyes in the world; as clever as daring, as rich as generous, a bold gamester, a passionate worshipper of women—such was my patron.

" Mistrustful of the gondoliers of his uncle, the Councillor, in whom, not without ground, he suspected spies on his goings and comings, the young gallant needed on his adventures a quick-witted, fearless fellow, a silent, perfectly reliable assistant—and in me he had found his man. Ah, when I think of those old wild times, those brilliant Carnivals, those nightly revelries and serenades, those mysterious rendezvous in the gardens of the Giudecca! Fathers and lovers cursed Orazio Memmo worse than the Grand Turk, and many a handful of silver coin has poured into my cap when my swift gondola has distanced the enraged pursuer, and I have landed the happy lover, undiscovered, on the marble steps of the Casa Memmo.

" Quick as thought did I spring to my legs at the sound of the well-known voice, then loosed the chain from the stake, and when his Excellency had seated himself on the luxurious cushions, pushed off vigorously from the land.

" The boat may have been gliding gently over the water for about half an hour. Inaudibly fell the oar into the green waves—but there was no hurry, and my patron had no aim but to dream away an hour in *dolce far niente*. Presently, however, a foreign

gondola rushed up with hasty strokes of the oars behind us, and then shot quickly past. The deck was covered with a silver carpet streaked in red, and the heavy silk tassels that hung from the gunwales trailed along the surface of the water. The two rowers were clothed in a rich stuff of the same design. In front of the cabin sat on a brocaded cushion a Moorish boy, with a broad golden neckband, a dagger hanging from glittering chains by his side, and balancing on his fist a shrill, rainbow-coloured parrot. The Venetian blinds were drawn up on both sides, and the eye could penetrate into the interior of the boat as she flew past.

"On the cushions reclined a divinely beautiful woman. A closely-fitting, gold-embroidered over-garment enveloped her dainty figure, and wide, open pantaloons of Eastern cut fell over her little slippers prettily worked in flowers. The long golden hair descended from the snowy whiteness of the brow, and fell in curly waves upon the shoulders and bosom. But how can I describe to you the sorcery of that lovely countenance, the moist glance of those black eyes, the smile that played around those pomegranate lips? As the foreign boat floated past our own, the lady put down the long-necked guitar, on whose golden strings her fingers had been dallying, and, with a skilful throw, cast a lily into our cabin, calling out at the same time a few foreign-sounding words. The rowers at once began to ply their oars lustily, and in the twinkling of an eye were a hundred yards in front.

"'Follow, follow, Antonello!' cried the patrician—'twenty sequins are thine if we overtake her, if we discover the home of this angelic stranger.'

"'You may rely upon me, Excellenza; so long as the oar does not break, and my arm retains its strength, the beautiful heathen shall not escape us.'

"And now to keep my word—to maintain my hard-won fame. Swift as the flight of doves fled the stranger before us, and like a bloodthirsty falcon we followed up behind. On the left they turned into one of the side streets, and there seemed to slacken their speed as if to make sure that we had not lost their track, as if they *wished* to be followed—and then once more started in wild haste through large and small canals—right and left, and then straight forward—past San Nicolo—till at last both the gondolas were rocking on the waters of the lagoon that lies on the road to Fusina.

"Still onwards fled the enchanting boat. Sometimes it was as if a shooting star was before us, so gloriously did the sun stream down on the glittering deck, and I was obliged to close my eyes to shut out the glare, and cease for a moment to row. Then the Count would urge me on to still greater efforts, and I would fall on my knee, and drive the oar deep into the water till the foam swirled high to the iron-comb of the figure-head.

" From out of the pursued gondola sounded now and then the sharp cry of the parrot, and then again the notes of a lute, to which the Moorish boy answered with the rattle of the tambourine, and at intervals the bewitching enticing voice of the Eastern. She sang:

Where arcades of oleander,
Purple in the gloaming show,
Where in founts marmorean wander,
Fish that gold and silvern glow;
Where nightingales
Sigh out their wails,
To love-sick maidens murm'ring low—
There, there,
Shalt thou with me my secret share.

Where the darts from Phœbus' quiver
Never pierce the myrtle groves,
Where by many a lonely river
Birds trill out their happy loves;
Where the gushing
Streamlet rushing
Through the starlit dingle roves—
There, there,
Shalt thou with me my secret share.

Orazio Memmo, one of the cleverest improvisers of his time, seized my zither, and answered at once:

Where thou leadest I will follow,
Sweet enigma, after thee;
Heed I not if joy or sorrow
The guerdon of my quest shall be—
Yet on the strand,
Enchantress, land,
And if thy heart incline to me—
There, there,
Shall I with thee thy secret share.

" We were approaching nearer and nearer to the strange gondola. Our bow cut anew the waves before the track of theirs had disappeared on the water, and the foam that followed her was like a silver cord which she had thrown out to drag us, like prisoners, behind her. Thus we ran into the Brenta Canal, flew past the sumptuous villas and pleasure houses of the rich Venetians, and stopped before a high marble portal, through the gilt bars of which we could look into a spacious garden laid out with princely magnificence.

" The stranger stepped out. By San Marco! a queenly form with witching grace in every movement. Slowly she turned her face, lighted with the sweetest smile, once more towards my master; from the soft, black, gazelle-like eyes gleamed on him a friendly light, and then she moved forward from the spot. The little Moor, holding a gaudy sunshade over the head of his mistress, and the

chattering bird on his fist, followed close at her heels. The gates flew open, shut clashing behind them; the pair then slowly approached the castle through a lane formed of laurels and myrtles, and vanished.

" ' Beautiful as a dream! ' cried Signor Memmo, rousing himself from his bewilderment; ' and to whom does the garden, the castle, belong? '

" ' I do not know at all, Excellenza; I see them to-day for the first time; and yet this is the Brenta Canal—a thousand times have I rowed over it; I know every gate, every villa, every bush—but, by San Antonio, never have I seen a stone of this castle before. Ah, Illustrissimo, take my word for it, all is not as it should be here! It is the delusion of the devil, nothing more. Utter but one " paternoster," and the whole phantasm will vanish like a streak of mist. Have you not heard of vampires? You have only to ask the Grecian and Illyrian boatmen, and they will tell you how the wraiths of these child-murderers appear as young and beautiful women, and fill with love the brains of the young men, and suck out their hearts' blood as they slumber. And such a vampire is the Eastern princess there—I will take the sacrament on it! Take my advice, Excellenza. Let us return, and that as quickly as possible. Here we stand on unholy ground.'

" I looked round now for the strange gondola; she had vanished completely, as though swallowed by the Brenta. I pointed this out to my master; he called me superstitious and a simpleton. I began to repeat an ' ave,' but the castle refused to vanish, and remained before my eyes a substantial and obstinate fact. Black cypresses looked with elongated necks over the wall, and fig-trees stretched gnarled branches like fingers towards us, as if to beckon us in. Glittering lizards crept up the parapets and looked at us with sparkling, spiteful eyes. On the cornices stood hideous figures in marble of the most repulsive ugliness—goat-footed satyrs that made faces at us, little hunchbacked creatures with three-cornered hats, crinolined dames with horses' heads, dragons, griffins, monsters with grins and leers and distortions that only *diabolus* could invent. Among the hateful masks walked a peacock with a long trailing tail, its blue neck shimmering in the sun.

" ' How to get into the garden? ' murmured Count Orazio, staring dreamily before him. ' The gate might be sealed—a bold spring, and——'

" ' What are you thinking of, Excellentissimo? ' said I, warningly. ' For the Madonna's sake, give up the thought. Your body and soul are alike at stake. Believe me, the devil walketh about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.'

" My warning sounded in deaf ears. He had already sprung from the gondola, when a wicket opened, and an old Moor stepped

before him with a deep curtsey; he brought a request from his mistress, the Signora Smeralda, for the honour of a visit in her garden. In vain did I hold back the blinded and intoxicated patrician by his black silk mantle; in vain did I try to excuse myself from following him; he rushed through the gate, dragging me with him, while the old slave remained to guard our gondola.

"Strange flowers, never seen before, such as can only be supposed to grow in the pleasure-gardens of the Great Mogul himself, nodded drowsily to us as we passed. Rainbow-coloured birds flew from branch to branch, twittering, singing, shouting with almost human voice, like a chorus of happy, chattering maidens. Once an ugly, long-tailed monkey swung himself down from a tree before us, holding on with his tail to a branch; grinned spitefully at us, and then hurried off once more into the wilderness of foliage. From one of the side alleys stepped a purple-coloured stork, as gravely as a major-domo, before us, swayed his long neck hither and thither, as if bowing to us, and then walked forward as our guide, ever and anon looking round to see if we followed. For my part, I followed as in a dream, resisting, and yet drawn forward as by some inexplicable magic.

"Presently we stood before an immense, strange-looking tree, with broad shining leaves hung thick with silvery bell-shaped blossoms. In the shade of its branches lay costly Persian carpets and cushions of crimson velvet embroidered in pearls, and on them the heathen Princess, surrounded by a bevy of beauteous maidens, was reclining with the utmost grace. The little Moor stood at her head, fanning her with a broad fan of bright peacock's feathers. The red stork, which had hitherto walked before us, now stood still, opened wide his legs, drove his long beak into the earth, and so, slightly raising its wings for cushions, formed a three-legged easy-chair, on which Count Orazio, at a sign from the lady, sat down.

"Lost in gazing at the fair Smeralda, the Count had sat down speechless before her, while she, calling for her lute, discoursed sweet music; I had stood beside his tripodal chair torn by many feelings, when the young Moor with a cunningly-worked golden goblet full of dark-red foaming wine stepped up to my master. 'Drink not of this brew of hell, Signor!' I whispered, and at the same time felt myself embraced by the white arm of a lovely little witch, who offered me a similar draught.

"My first instinct was to spurn from me the beautiful little elf, to dash away the magic draught—but the wine gave out so sweet an aroma, sparkled so enticingly, so brightly, within the golden walls! The eyes of the elf glanced so entreatingly at me, her arms wound themselves so tenderly about me—ah, the spirit truly was willing, but the flesh was weak!

"Only one sip, thought I, only the wetting of the tip of my

tongue—that will hardly cost me my neck. And then I sipped, I tasted, I sucked, I gulped down the liquid to the very last drop—then I fell on the neck of the pretty temptress, and on looking round saw my master on his knees before the seductive Smeralda. I touched with my own the lips of my charmer—my senses whirled in a transport of delight—when breathless from out the bushes rushed the negro boy, crying, 'Fly! Fly! All is lost! Porporinazzo, our gracious master, is coming! He raves in his rage!'

"Ah, the warning voice had come too late; scarcely had it sounded when a short, globular creature, of the form and colour of a dark-red apple, rolled up to Smeralda and her *inamorato*. On close observation there might certainly be discovered some indications, at the extremities of the creature, of the existence of limbs, which you might or might not take to be head, arms, and legs; but of the depressions and bumps at the north pole of this globe, to construct in fancy eyes, nose, and mouth, required a quite special faculty, of which I was not the master.

"'Is this the thanks, serpent, for the trust reposed in you?' shrieked Porporinazzo to the pale Smeralda. 'Is this the reward of my true and constant love? You stoop to this unbelieving dog; and me, me, Don Porporinazzo, the Grand Master of the Wardrobe of the Sultan, thou desertest! Ha! by Mohammed's sacred cat, this cries aloud for bloody vengeance! Slaves, approach!'

"Six negroes, with diabolical physiognomies, with arms and sabres bare, started from the hedges, seized Orazio and myself, and tied our hands behind our backs. In vain did the Count plead his inviolability as a Venetian noble; in vain did he threaten with the wrath of the Doge and of the Senate. The little Grand Master made a sign with his little arm—a flash, a sabre-stroke—and our two heads were rolling on the ground!

"My fair one had long ago fled behind the myrtle hedge, and Signora Smeralda had taken the stereotyped step of ladies in desperate circumstances—she had fainted. The tyrant Porporinazzo, proud of his bloody deed, had now retired once more into the palace. I could see all, for my head was lying on the ground, with its nose turned skywards. Once or twice I made convulsive efforts with my arms to catch it, and fix it on my trunk again—but my hands clutched only empty air, and sank, nerveless, down. No words can describe my condition; only those who have found themselves in a like position, and felt their heads at so unreasonable a distance from their bodies, can at all appreciate my emotions at that moment.

"The spherical Grand Master of the Wardrobe had scarcely turned his back, when Smeralda awoke out of her faint, burst into a flood of tears, and despairingly wrung her hands. At the same moment my fugitive loved one emerged from her hiding-place, but

lost no time in meaningless commonplaces, urging on her mistress to make the best of the precious moments.

" ' For heaven's sake, Signora,' she said, ' send for a doctor, the cleverest there is to be had. Quick! With every second the blood grows colder and colder. In five minutes it will be too late. The magic doctor, Bartolinetto, of Padua, would be just the man—only quick, quick! Send Don Flamingo to Padua—for on his activity and fidelity we can safely rely.'

" ' Happy thought, Libella,' answered the Princess; ' call the Don.'

" She clapped her hands thrice. The great red stork strode quickly up, and at a few whispered words from the elf, nodded as if in assent, and flew crowing into the air.

" Four pairs of eyes gazed now with anxious expectancy towards heaven. A horrid pause, during which the fair ladies dared not, and the Count and I could not, breathe, ensued. But before you could say a ' paternoster ' there was once more a rushing noise high in the air, and the mighty bird stormed down, holding Doctor Bartolinetto, like a halfpenny doll, in his beak, and placed him, a little thin brown man, neat and well dressed, though a little out of breath, upon the ground.

" A glance sufficed to make the learned man acquainted with the state of affairs. He felt our pulse, then drew from his pocket the famous Perlimpimpino powder, his own infallible discovery, and turned up his coat sleeves. He was grumbling all the time at the indelicacy of his being interrupted in the middle of a lecture and dragged forcibly out of his college, to the scandal of his audience, and loudly bemoaned the derangement of his powdered wig, which had somewhat suffered in his aerial journey; then he seized my head by the nose, sprinkled some of the Perlimpimpino powder on the neck, dabbed it on to the defective part, took Orazio's head, did the same with that—we sneezed three times with some emphasis, sprang blithely up, shook ourselves, sneezed once more—the cure was complete!

" The fair ones flew joyfully to our arms; on my cheek burned the kiss of the beautiful Smeralda, while Libella hugged the Count—but to kiss, to tear away from the embrace, to utter a startled cry, was the work of an instant. Dreadful mistake! The doctor in his hurry had stuck my head on Orazio's shoulders, and that of the noble on the trunk of the poor gondolier!

" On recovering from the first shock at the discovery we turned to vent our wrath on the doctor. The nobleman promised him a hundred lashes, and I threatened still worse things, unless he restored to each his own. Poor Bartolinetto shrugged his shoulders till they reached his ears, made the most profuse apologies, and sought to pacify us with the sophism that ' after all, a head was a

head.' But every one felt the hollowness of the plea; Smeralda called him a ' wretched old quack,' Libella threatened to make for his eyes. His reproaches of ingratitude were unheeded, his suggestion of a fee was rejected with scornful laughter. At a sign from Libella, he was again seized by the stork, and carried back thus ignominiously to Padua.

" We now directed our rage against each other. Our imprecations and threats would soon have developed into actual violence, had not each feared to do a part of himself some injury while belabouring his antagonist. Which was now Orazio, which Antonello? Which nobleman, and which gondolier? My old head pleaded its new and noble body as the most important half, maintaining that the hull of a ship alone determined its class, the flag which might happen to be hoisted at its stern being a mere secondary detail. My opponent, on the other hand, compared himself to a column in which the capital is the sole feature determining to what order it is to belong. The two fair ladies tried to settle our dispute—but they were themselves soon hopelessly confused, and ended by advising us to return to Venice and lay our case before the magistrates.

" Coldly we bade them farewell and departed. Antonello-Orazio, or the peasant head on the noble trunk, threw himself in a lazy and distinguished way on the cushions, and haughtily commanded Orazio-Antonello to row back. The latter was compelled to obey, for his plebeian arms alone could ply the oars and guide the helm—but he gnashed his teeth, and swore to take dreadful vengeance for this insult; and so we rowed back—the grandee with the coarse red gondolier's cap sitting on the cushions, and laughing to scorn the proud peasant in the bows with his feathered hat and faultlessly dainty wig.

" We landed at the *piazzetta*. Negligently I drew out the purse which I found in my new clothes, and tossed the rower a coin.

" ' Give me back my money! ' he cried; ' give me my rings, my watch, my head! '

" ' Silence, wretched slave,' I cried; ' darest thou lay hands on my inviolate person? Help, help, against this crack-brained gondolier! '

" ' Help, help,' he exclaimed, ' against this insolent boatman! '

" A crowd had by this time assembled, some taking my part and some his. The Doge, who was just then walking up and down the colonnade of his palace, heard the scandal, and ordered us to be placed in the inner dungeon of the Inquisition, and brought up for trial the same evening.

" The Public Prosecutor accused us, not only of the black art itself, but of being disturbers of the public peace and conspirators against the safety of the State. ' What have we come to,' he de-

claimed, ' when our senators and patricians begin to change their heads as often as their wigs? To lose the head is human. The history of the illustrious Republic is not poor in examples of senators and generals, aye, and Doges too, who have suffered this misfortune—but an exchange of heads, that is, indeed, an unparalleled proceeding! What endless upheavals of the Constitution may not be expected when noble and common blood begins to mingle in the same body? What endless confusion of aristocratic and democratic principles in the same man! A short-sighted leniency in this matter may mean the disruption of the State, the crumbling into atoms of the Republic. I decree therefore the death by beheadal of both the criminals.'

" The Secretary of the Inquisition informed us of our doom; at midnight we were to pay the penalty of the little doctor's mistake. Ah, what mortal has ever met a fate like ours? Who is there can boast of being, like us, beheaded twice within the space of four-and-twenty hours?

" The keeper of the prison was, as it happened, an old friend of mine, and a second cousin. The unspeakable pickle I was in moved him even to tears, and he tried to comfort me by the assurance that the pain of beheadal was nothing to speak of—a short electric shock—a tickling sensation made piquant with a dash of pain—that was all! But I shook my head sadly, and wept. Of all this I already knew somewhat more than he could tell me. Suddenly a glorious thought struck me. After our miraculous cure, as I now remembered, my fingers, guided either by the directing brain of Orazio or by the old instinct of Antonello, had picked up the remnants of the Perlimpimpino powder left by the doctor. ' Cousin! ' I now exclaimed, ' you can save me yet; you can save the Count! Hasten to his cell, remind him of the remains of the powder in his pocket, and learn from him the way to use it, and all will yet be well! ' He shook his head incredulously, pressed my hand, and went.

" Sadly passed the minutes away. The horrid doubt oppressed me, whether the powder would exercise its wondrous efficacy in the absence of the doctor; whether the mystic sentences he spoke over it had not everything to do with its power; whether the gaoler could exercise the necessary quickness and accuracy in its use. The lamp that half lit up my low vault burnt darkly and sadly, as if impatiently waiting my departure, so that it too might go to sleep. In despair I threw myself on the marble bench and shut my eyes, but the glitter of the dreadful axe shone through my fast-closed eyelids. Then a knock at the door sounded in my ears, and the words: ' Wake up, Antonello, the priest is waiting; take thy beheading, cousin, and afterwards thou mayest sleep till the trump of doom! '

" The memory of what followed—of confession and absolution, of the executioner's block—has completely vanished from my brain. I only know that I sneezed violently, opened my eyes, and found myself once more in my usual dress, lying at the foot of the column under the shadow of the holy Teodoro; that I saw standing at my feet the patrician Orazio Memmo, and that I heard him calling, ' Hi, wake up, Antonello! A league's row on the canal! '

" ' Excellenza! ' I cried, ' and you will go again to the enchanted garden of Porporinazzo? And we are both really alive and free, and the confusion with our heads is now happily disposed of? '

" He measured me with his eye, shook his head as if at a loss to understand me, and asked if I was still dreaming, or if the cheap Vincentin wine was muddling my brain. Dejected and silent I loosed the chain and rowed the nobleman up and down. No trace of any strange red and silver gondola could be seen, far or near. Count Orazio dozed away the hour on the water with a composure that seemed inexplicable to me. When we landed, I implored him at least to tell me whether we had no further consequences to fear on the part of the Tribunal; whether he had not saved a pinch or two of the Perlimpimpino's powder for future contingencies. But he persisted in pretending surprise and called me a fool; and I then concluded that a stony silence had been imposed on him by the Inquisition, and that he pretended ignorance with design.

" Since that day I have not breathed a word of the incident to any human being; and you, my children, are the first to whom, under the seal of an oath, I entrust it. Had I not, since that day, suffered from a peculiar twitching sensation in the neck, at the place where the double wound was made—especially when the weather changes—I might have taken the whole for a dreadful dream. As it is, however, the plain facts remain, burned in, in vivid colours, on my brain."

With these words my father closed his story, the telling of which had used up all his remaining strength. We sent at once for the priest of San Moise. He came with the holy Viaticum, and anointed the forehead of my father, who soon after breathed out his last sigh. Peace be with the soul of the honest man!

WILHELM HAUFF

1802–1827

THE SEVERED HAND

I WAS born in Constantinople; my father was a dragoman at the Porte, and besides, carried on a fairly lucrative business in sweet-scented perfumes and silk goods. He gave me a good education; he partly instructed me himself, and also had me instructed by one of our priests. He at first intended me to succeed him in business one day, but as I showed greater aptitude than he had expected, he destined me, on the advice of his friends, to be a doctor; for if a doctor has learned a little more than the ordinary charlatan, he can make his fortune in Constantinople. Many Franks frequented our house, and one of them persuaded my father to allow me to travel to his native land to the city of Paris, where such things could be best acquired and free of charge. He wished, however, to take me with him himself gratuitously on his journey home. My father, who had also travelled in his youth, agreed, and the Frank told me to hold myself in readiness three months hence. I was beside myself with joy at the idea of seeing foreign countries, and eagerly awaited the moment when we should embark. The Frank had at last concluded his business and prepared himself for the journey. On the evening before our departure my father led me into his little bedroom. There I saw splendid dresses and arms lying on the table. My looks were, however, chiefly attracted to an immense heap of gold, for I had never before seen so much collected together.

My father embraced me and said, " Behold, my son, I have procured for thee clothes for the journey. These weapons are thine; they are the same which thy grandfather hung around me when I went abroad. I know that thou canst use them right; but only make use of them when thou art attacked; on such occasions, however, defend thyself bravely. My property is not large; behold I have divided it into three parts, one part for thee, another for my support and spare money, but the third is to me a sacred and untouched property, it is for thee in the hour of need." Thus spoke my old father, tears standing in his eyes, perhaps from some foreboding, for I never saw him again.

The journey passed off very well; we had soon reached the land of the Franks, and six days later we arrived in the large city of

Paris. There my Frankish friend hired a room for me, and advised me to spend wisely my money, which amounted in all to two thousand dollars. I lived three years in this city, and learned what is necessary for a skilful doctor to know. I should not, however, be stating the truth if I said that I liked being there, for the customs of this nation displeased me; besides, I had only a few chosen friends there, and these were noble young men.

The longing after home at last possessed me mightily; during the whole of that time I had not heard anything from my father, and I therefore seized a favourable opportunity of reaching home. An embassy from France left for Turkey. I acted as surgeon to the suite of the Ambassador and arrived happily in Stamboul. My father's house was locked, and the neighbours, who were surprised on seeing me, told me my father had died two months ago. The priest who had instructed me in my youth brought me the key; alone and desolate I entered the empty house. All was still in the same position as my father had left it, only the gold which I was to inherit was gone. I questioned the priest about it, and he, bowing, said, "Your father died a saint, for he has bequeathed his gold to the Church." This was and remained inexplicable to me. However, what could I do? I had no witness against the priest, and had to be glad that he had not considered the house and the goods of my father as a bequest. This was the first misfortune that I encountered. Henceforth nothing but ill-luck attended me. My reputation as doctor would not spread at all, because I was ashamed to act the charlatan; and I felt everywhere the want of the recommendation of my father, who would have introduced me to the richest and most distinguished, but who now no longer thought of the poor Zaleukos! The goods of my father also had no sale, for his customers came no more after his death, and new ones are only to be got slowly.

Thus when I was one day meditating sadly over my position, it occurred to me that I had often seen in France men of my nation travelling through the country exhibiting their goods in the markets of the towns. I remembered that the people liked to buy of them, because they came from abroad, and that such a business would be most lucrative. Immediately I resolved what to do. I disposed of my father's house, gave part of the money to a trusty friend to keep for me, and with the rest I bought what are very rare in France, shawls, silk goods, ointments and oils, took a berth on board a ship, and thus entered upon my second journey to the land of the Franks. It seemed as if fortune had favoured me again as soon as I had turned my back upon the Castles of the Dardanelles. Our journey was short and successful. I travelled through the large and small towns of the Franks, and found everywhere willing buyers of my goods. My friend in Stamboul always sent me fresh

stores, and my wealth increased day by day. When I had saved at last so much that I thought I might venture on a greater undertaking, I travelled with my goods to Italy. I must, however, confess to something, which brought me not a little money: I also employed my knowledge of physic. On reaching a town, I had it published that a Greek physician had arrived, who had already healed many; and in fact my balsam and medicine gained me many a sequin. Thus I had at length reached the city of Florence in Italy.

I resolved upon remaining in this town for some time, partly because I liked it so well, partly also because I wished to recruit myself from the exertions of my travels. I hired a vaulted shop, in that part of the town called Sta. Croce, and not far from this a couple of nice rooms at an inn, leading out upon a balcony. I immediately had my bills circulated, which announced me to be both physician and merchant. Scarcely had I opened my shop when I was besieged by buyers, and in spite of my high prices I sold more than any one else, because I was obliging and friendly towards my customers. Thus I had already lived four days happily in Florence, when one evening, as I was about to close my vaulted room, and on examining once more the contents of my ointment boxes, as I was in the habit of doing, I found in one of the small boxes a piece of paper, which I did not remember to have put into it.

I unfolded the paper, and found in it an invitation to be on the bridge which is called Ponte Vecchio that night exactly at midnight. I was thinking for a long time as to who it might be who had invited me there; and not knowing a single soul in Florence, I thought perhaps I should be secretly conducted to a patient, a thing which had already often occurred. I therefore determined to proceed thither, but took care to gird on the sword which my father had once presented to me. When it was close upon midnight I set out on my journey, and soon reached the Ponte Vecchio. I found the bridge deserted, and determined to await the appearance of him who called me. It was a cold night; the moon shone brightly, and I looked down upon the waves of the Arno, which sparkled far away in the moonlight. It was now striking twelve o'clock from all the churches of the city, when I looked up and saw a tall man standing before me completely covered in a scarlet cloak, one end of which hid his face.

At first I was somewhat frightened, because he had made his appearance so suddenly; but was, however, myself again shortly afterwards, and said, " If it is you who have ordered me here, say what you want." The man dressed in scarlet turned round and said in an undertone, " Follow! " At this, however, I felt a little timid to go alone with this stranger. I stood still and said, " Not

so, sir; kindly first tell me where; you might also let me see your countenance a little, in order to convince me that you wish me no harm." The red one, however, did not seem to pay any attention to this. "If thou art unwilling, Zaleukos, remain," he replied, and continued his way. I grew angry. "Do you think," I exclaimed, "a man like myself allows himself to be made a fool of, and to have waited on this cold night for nothing?"

In three bounds I had reached him, seized him by his cloak, and cried still louder, whilst laying hold of my sabre with my other hand. His cloak, however, remained in my hand, and the stranger had disappeared round the nearest corner. I became calmer by degrees. I had the cloak at any rate, and it was this which would give me the key to this remarkable adventure. I put it on and continued my way home. When I was at a distance of about a hundred paces from it, some one brushed very closely by me and whispered in the language of the Franks, "Take care, Count, nothing can be done to-night." Before I had time, however, to turn round, this somebody had passed, and I merely saw a shadow hovering along the houses. I perceived that these words did not concern me, but rather the cloak, yet it gave me no explanation concerning the affair. On the following morning I considered what was to be done. At first I had intended to have the cloak cried in the streets, as if I had found it. But then the stranger might send for it by a third person, and thus no light would be thrown upon the matter. Whilst I was thus thinking, I examined the cloak more closely. It was made of thick Genoese velvet, scarlet in colour, edged with astrakhan fur and richly embroidered with gold. The magnificent appearance of the cloak put a thought into my mind which I resolved to carry out.

I carried it into my shop and exposed it for sale, but placed such a high price upon it that I was sure nobody would buy it. My object in this was to scrutinise everybody sharply who might ask for the fur cloak; for the figure of the stranger, which I had seen but superficially though with some certainty, after the loss of the cloak, I should recognise amongst a thousand. There were many would-be purchasers for the cloak, the extraordinary beauty of which attracted everybody; but none resembled the stranger in the slightest degree, and nobody was willing to pay such a high price as two hundred sequins for it. What astonished me was that on asking somebody or other if there was not such a cloak in Florence, they all answered "No," and assured me they never had seen so precious and tasteful a piece of work.

Evening was drawing near, when at last a young man appeared, who had already been to my place, and who had also offered me a great deal for the cloak. He threw a purse with sequins upon the table, and exclaimed, "Of a truth, Zaleukos, I must have thy

cloak, should I turn into a beggar over it!" He immediately began to count his pieces of gold. I was in a dangerous position: I had only exposed the cloak, in order merely to attract the attention of my stranger, and now a young fool came to pay an immense price for it. However, what could I do? I yielded; for on the other hand I was delighted at the idea of being so handsomely recompensed for my nocturnal adventure.

The young man put the cloak around him and went away, but on reaching the threshold he returned; whilst unfastening a piece of paper which had been tied to the cloak, and throwing it towards me, he exclaimed, "Here, Zaleukos, hangs something which I dare say does not belong to the cloak." I picked up the piece of paper carelessly, but behold, on it these words were written: "Bring the cloak at the appointed hour to-night to the Ponte Vecchio, four hundred sequins are thine." I stood thunderstruck. Thus I had lost my fortune and completely missed my aim! Yet I did not think long. I picked up the two hundred sequins, jumped after the one who had bought the cloak, and said, "Dear friend, take back your sequins, and give me the cloak; I cannot possibly part with it." He first regarded the matter as a joke; but when he saw that I was in earnest, he became angry at my demand, called me a fool, and finally it came to blows.

However, I was fortunate enough to wrench the cloak from him in the scuffle, and was about to run away with it, when the young man called the police to his assistance, and we both appeared before the judge. The latter was much surprised at the accusation, and adjudicated the cloak in favour of my adversary. I offered the young man twenty, fifty, eighty, even a hundred sequins in addition to his two hundred, if he would part with the cloak. What my entreaties could not do, my gold did. He accepted it. I, however, went away with the cloak triumphantly, and had to appear to the whole town of Florence as a madman. I did not care, however, about the opinion of the people; I knew better than they that I had profited after all by the bargain.

Impatiently I awaited the night. At the same hour as before I went with the cloak under my arm towards the Ponte Vecchio. With the last stroke of twelve the figure appeared out of the darkness and came towards me. It was unmistakably the man whom I had seen yesterday. "Hast thou the cloak?" he asked me. "Yes, sir," I replied; "but it cost me a hundred sequins ready money." "I know it," replied the other. "Look here, here are four hundred." He went with me towards the wide balustrade of the bridge, and counted out the money. There were four hundred; they sparkled magnificently in the moonlight; their glitter rejoiced my heart. Alas, I did not anticipate that this would be its last joy. I put the money into my pocket, and was desirous of

thoroughly looking at my kind and unknown stranger; but he wore a mask, through which dark eyes stared at me frightfully. "I thank you, sir, for your kindness," I said to him; "what else do you require of me? I tell you beforehand it must be an honourable transaction." "There is no occasion for alarm," he replied, whilst winding the cloak around his shoulders; "I require your assistance as surgeon, not for one alive, but dead."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed, full of surprise. "I arrived with my sister from abroad," he said, and beckoned me at the same time to follow him. "I lived here with her at the house of a friend. My sister died yesterday suddenly of a disease, and my relatives wish to bury her to-morrow. According to an old custom of our family all are to be buried in the tomb of our ancestors; many, notwithstanding, who died in foreign countries are buried there and embalmed. I do not grudge my relatives her body, but for my father I want at least the head of his daughter, in order that he may see her once more." This custom of severing the heads of beloved relatives appeared to me somewhat awful, yet I did not dare to object to it lest I should offend the stranger. I told him that I was acquainted with the embalming of the dead, and begged him to conduct me to the deceased. Yet I could not help asking him why all this must be done so mysteriously and at night. He answered me that his relatives, who considered his intention horrible, objected to it by daylight; if only the head were severed, then they could say no more about it; although he might have brought me the head, yet a natural feeling had prevented him from severing it himself.

In the meantime we had reached a large, splendid house. My companion pointed it out to me as the end of our nocturnal walk. We passed the principal entrance of the house, entered a little door, which the stranger carefully locked behind him, and then ascended in the dark a narrow spiral staircase. It led towards a dimly lighted passage, out of which we entered a room lighted by a lamp fastened to the ceiling.

In this room was a bed, on which the corpse lay. The stranger turned aside his face, evidently endeavouring to hide his tears. He pointed towards the bed, telling me to do my business well and quickly, and left the room.

I took my instruments, which I as surgeon always carried about with me, and approached the bed. Only the head of the corpse was visible, and it was so beautiful that I experienced involuntarily the deepest sympathy. Dark hair hung down in long plaits, the features were pale, the eyes closed. At first I made an incision into the skin, after the manner of surgeons when amputating a limb. I then took my sharpest knife, and with one stroke cut the throat. But oh, horror! The dead opened her eyes, but im-

mediately closed them again, and with a deep sigh now seemed to breathe her last. At the same moment a stream of hot blood shot towards me from the wound. I was convinced that the poor creature had been killed by me. That she was dead there was no doubt, for there was no recovery from this wound. I stood for some minutes in painful anguish at what had happened. Had the "red-cloak" deceived me, or had his sister perhaps merely been apparently dead? The latter seemed to me more likely. But I dare not tell the brother of the deceased that perhaps a little less deliberate cut might have awakened her without killing her; therefore I wished to sever the head completely; but once more the dying woman groaned, stretched herself out in painful movements, and died.

Fright overpowered me, and, shuddering, I hastened out of the room. But outside in the passage it was dark; for the light was out, no trace of my companion was to be seen, and I was obliged, haphazard, to feel my way in the dark along the wall, in order to reach the staircase. I discovered it at last and descended, partly falling and partly gliding. But there was not a soul downstairs. I merely found the door ajar, and breathed freer on reaching the street, for I had felt very strange inside the house. Urged on by terror, I rushed towards my dwelling-place, and buried myself in the cushions of my bed, in order to forget the terrible thing that I had done.

But sleep deserted me, and only the morning admonished me again to take courage. It seemed to me probable that the man who had induced me to commit this nefarious deed, as it now appeared to me, might not denounce me. I immediately resolved to set to work in my vaulted room, and if possible to assume an indifferent look. But alas! an additional circumstance, which I only now noticed, increased my anxiety still more. My cap and my girdle, as well as my instruments, were wanting, and I was uncertain as to whether I had left them in the room of the murdered girl, or whether I had lost them in my flight. The former seemed indeed the more likely, and thus I could easily be discovered as the murderer.

At the accustomed hour I opened my vaulted room. My neighbour came in, as was his wont every morning, for he was a talkative man. "Well," he said, "what do you say about the terrible affair which has occurred during the night?" I pretended not to know anything. "What, do you not know what is known all over the town? Are you not aware that the loveliest flower in Florence, Bianca, the Governor's daughter, was murdered last night? I saw her only yesterday driving through the streets in so cheerful a manner with her intended one, for to-day the marriage was to have taken place." I felt deeply wounded at each

word of my neighbour. Many a time my torment was renewed, for every one of my customers told me of the affair, each one more ghastly than the other, and yet nobody could relate anything more terrible than that which I had seen myself.

About mid-day a police officer entered my shop and requested me to send the people away. "Signor Zaleukos," he said, producing the things which I had missed, "do these things belong to you?" I was thinking as to whether I should not entirely repudiate them, but on seeing through the door, which stood ajar, my landlord and several acquaintances, I determined not to aggravate the affair by telling a lie, and acknowledged myself as the owner of the things. The police officer asked me to follow him, and led me towards a large building which I soon recognised as the prison. There he showed me into a room meanwhile.

My situation was terrible, as I thought of it in my solitude. The idea of having committed a murder, unintentionally, constantly presented itself to my mind. I also could not conceal from myself that the glitter of the gold had captivated my feelings, otherwise I should not have fallen blindly into the trap. Two hours after my arrest I was led out of my cell. I descended several steps until at last I reached a great hall. Around a long table draped in black were seated twelve men, mostly old men. There were benches along the sides of the hall, filled with the most distinguished of Florence. The galleries, which were above, were thickly crowded with spectators. When I had stepped towards the table covered with black cloth, a man with a gloomy and sad countenance rose; it was the Governor. He said to the assembly that he as the father in this affair could not sentence, and that he resigned his place on this occasion to the eldest of the Senators. The eldest of the Senators was an old man at least ninety years of age. He stood in a bent attitude, and his temples were covered with thin white hair, but his eyes were as yet very fiery, and his voice powerful and weighty. He commenced by asking me whether I confessed to the murder. I requested him to allow me to speak, and related undauntingly and with a clear voice what I had done, and what I knew.

I noticed that the Governor, during my recital, at one time turned pale, and at another time red. When I had finished, he rose angrily: "What, wretch!" he exclaimed, "dost thou even dare to impute a crime which thou hast committed from greediness to another?" The Senator reprimanded him for his interruption, since he had voluntarily renounced his right; besides it was not clear that I did the deed from greediness, for, according to his own statement, nothing had been stolen from the victim. He even went further. He told the Governor that he must give an account of the early life of his daughter, for then only it would be possible

to decide whether I had spoken the truth or not. At the same time he adjourned the court for the day, in order, as he said, to consult the papers of the deceased, which the Governor would give him. I was again taken back to my prison, where I spent a wretched day, always fervently wishing that a link between the deceased and the " red-cloak " might be discovered. Full of hope, I entered the Court of Justice the next day. Several letters were lying upon the table. The old Senator asked me whether they were in my handwriting. I looked at them and noticed that they must have been written by the same hand as the other two papers which I had received. I communicated this to the Senators, but no attention was paid to it, and they told me that I might have written both, for the signature of the letters was undoubtedly a Z, the first letter of my name. The letters, however, contained threats against the deceased, and warnings against the marriage which she was about to contract.

The Governor seemed to have given extraordinary information concerning me, for I was treated with more suspicion and rigour on this day. I referred, to justify myself, to my papers which must be in my room, but was told they had been looked for without success. Thus at the conclusion of this sitting all hope vanished, and on being brought into the court the third day, judgment was pronounced on me. I was convicted of wilful murder and condemned to death. Things had come to such a pass! Deserted by all that was precious to me upon earth, far away from home, I was to die innocently in the bloom of my life.

On the evening of this terrible day which had decided my fate, I was sitting in my lonely cell, my hopes were gone, my thoughts steadfastly fixed upon death, when the door of my prison opened, and in came a man, who for a long time looked at me silently. " Is it thus I find you again, Zaleukos? " he said. I had not recognised him by the dim light of my lamp, but the sound of his voice roused in me old remembrances. It was Valetti, one of those few friends whose acquaintance I made in the city of Paris when I was studying there. He said that he had come to Florence accidentally, where his father, who was a distinguished man, lived. He had heard about my affair, and had come to see me once more, and to hear from my own lips how I could have committed such a crime. I related to him the whole affair. He seemed much surprised at it, and adjured me, as my only friend, to tell him all, in order not to leave the world with a lie behind me. I confirmed my assertions with an oath that I had spoken the truth, and that I was not guilty of anything, except that the glitter of the gold had dazzled me, and that I had not perceived the improbability of the story of the stranger. " Did you not know Bianca? " he asked me. I assured him that I had never seen her. Valetti now related

to me that a profound mystery rested on the affair, that the Governor had very much accelerated my condemnation, and now a report was spread that I had known Bianca for a long time, and had murdered her out of revenge for her marriage with some one else. I told him that all this coincided exactly with the "red-cloak," but that I was unable to prove his participation in the affair. Valetti embraced me weeping, and promised me to do all that was possible, at least to save my life.

I had little hope, though I knew that Valetti was a clever man, well versed in the law, and that he would do all in his power to save my life. For two long days I was in uncertainty; at last Valetti appeared. "I bring consolation, though painful. You will live and be free with the loss of one hand." Affected, I thanked my friend for saving my life. He told me that the Governor had been inexorable in having the affair investigated a second time, but that he at last, in order not to appear unjust, had agreed that, if a similar case could be found in the law books of the history of Florence, my punishment should be the same as the one recorded in these books. He and his father had searched in the old books day and night, and at last found a case quite similar to mine. The sentence was: That his left hand be cut off, his property confiscated, and he himself banished for ever. This was my punishment also, and he asked me to prepare for the painful hour which awaited me. I will not describe to you that terrible hour, when I laid my hand upon the block in the public market-place and my own blood shot over me in broad streams.

Valetti took me to his house until I had recovered; he then most generously supplied me with money for travelling, for all I had acquired with so much difficulty had fallen a prey to the law. I left Florence for Sicily and embarked on the first ship that I found for Constantinople. My hope was fixed upon the sum which I had entrusted to my friend. I also requested to be allowed to live with him. But how great was my astonishment on being asked why I did not wish to live in my own house. He told me that some unknown man had bought a house in the Greek Quarter in my name, and this very man had also told the neighbours of my early arrival. I immediately proceeded thither accompanied by my friend, and was received by all my old acquaintances joyfully. An old merchant gave me a letter, which the man who had bought the house for me had left behind. I read as follows: "Zaleukos! Two hands are prepared to work incessantly, in order that you may not feel the loss of one of yours. The house which you see and all its contents are yours, and every year you will receive enough to be counted amongst the rich of your people. Forgive him who is unhappier than yourself!" I could guess who had written it, and in answer to my question the merchant told me it

had been a man, whom he took for a Frank, and who had worn a scarlet cloak. I knew enough to understand that the stranger was, after all, not entirely devoid of noble intentions. In my new house I found everything arranged in the best style, also a vaulted room stored with goods, more splendid than I had ever had. Ten years have passed since. I still continue my commercial travels, more from old custom than necessity, yet I have never again seen that country where I became so unfortunate. Every year since, I have received a thousand gold pieces; and although I rejoice to know that unfortunate man to be noble, yet he cannot relieve me of the sorrow of my soul, for the terrible picture of the murdered Bianca is continually on my mind.

JOHANN GABRIEL SEIDL

1804–1875

THE BLUE APRON

HARDLY had I rung the door-bell at my friend the doctor's house, when once again two bright black eyes looked out on me through the small grilled opening in the top panel of the massive street door. Again, as often before, a silvery voice put the question, "Who is there?" And again the door swung back immediately I gave my name, and a dainty young woman told me in accents of regret, "Oh, dear sir, I am sorry you have called in vain; the doctor has gone out to visit some friends in town."

How different this kindly information from the stupid answers often received on similar occasions from an ignorant domestic, or from the arrogant shoulder-shrug of an overbearing flunkey! Very rarely, I must own, did the girl's polite regrets quite satisfy me; I felt a desire to linger; I questioned her about the details of the doctor's journey to town, as to when he was likely to return, and about other points sufficiently interesting to ensure an interesting answer. I always felt then as if I was speaking not to a poor servant girl, but to some young lady. With a feeling of tender shyness I glanced at her face, so dear to me, and so pallid—with always that look of deep pain just above the bright eyes. I noted her evasive replies to any question of mine, however discreetly worded, as to her position before she came into my friend's service.

I had meant to question the doctor long ago about this girl, who, as her dress and idiom proclaimed, had obviously come from some far-away district. But in spite of the unquestionable trust that I reposed both in him and in this dear girl, I had so far not found the courage necessary. You will admit there are certain situations which only become painful to those immediately concerned when they are made the subject of idle gossip and inquisitiveness, and I did not wish my curiosity to appear inquisitive. At last, on a certain evening of pleasant, intimate talk at my friend's, when we discussed the lazy uncertainty and tedium of bachelordom, the opportunity presented itself quite unsought.

"As far as my state of single blessedness goes," declared the doctor, "I have nothing whatever to complain of: I enjoy all its advantages; and as to its disadvantages, which overtake the unwary,

the clumsy, and the inexperienced, in short, nearly every man, my —Jette protects me against these."

"Your Jette?" answered I, "that gentle and modest girl who always opens the door to me? She seems to be a very good-natured and domesticated person; one sees her excellent qualities in everything she does."

"She would do anything for me," replied the doctor; "I suppose I should not speak about it, but I really owe my good temper, as well as my broad views on certain matters of common prejudice, to her devotion to me. She hails from the Rhine; I came upon her quite by accident on my last journey there."

"I always thought she belonged to the Rhenish counties. Is she an orphan? I have often wondered what strange story her sadness hid, and her whole appearance has often curiously moved me."

I saw the doctor hesitate, and then, preparing to continue, he said, "I think I will tell you the story of this poor girl, in the hope that you will understand that my intentions are honest towards her. Just listen then. On my travels I arrived one day in a village upon the banks of the Rhine; the river bordered it on the one side, while the other three sides were shut in by hills rising to some considerable height. It was Sunday, and the church bells were calling the people to service. Fresh-complexioned and happy girls passed me, wishing me the time of day. Cleanliness and prosperity were apparent in both their bearing and their costumes. Girls and youths were making their way to church. I was particularly struck with the spotless whiteness of the apron that every girl was wearing, and in which they appeared to take especial delight, although these aprons seemed only an insignificant addition to the simple, tasteful dresses they were wearing. Just as I had turned the corner near the church, a strange sight met my eyes; a pretty, pale young girl, all alone—it was Jette—hurried along, wearing a glaring blue apron; she called out friendly merry greetings as she came up to the others, but they kept off from her as if she was a leper, and crying, 'The blue apron!' they left her by herself. Bursting into tears, Jette tottered backwards and found support against the village lime tree—I was almost behind it as I stood there watching—and sobbing loudly she wrung her hands in utter despair. The unhappy girl aroused my sympathy. I noticed how the girls in passing turned away from her, whispering scornfully; how proudly they straightened and surveyed their dazzling white aprons, while tears of desolate despair fell on the blue apron of the girl they despised.

"That the colour of the apron had some bearing on the display of public opinion I had gathered by now, without, however, guessing the reason. Then the remarks of some of the youths as they

passed gave me the clue I had been seeking to find. The poor girl never moved under all the scorn that was heaped on her, and for a long time stood rooted to the spot. Suddenly, as if roused by some powerful impulse, she pulled herself together and feebly staggered away through a narrow alley. I followed. On the bank of the Rhine she stopped. I was immediately behind her, though unnoticed. I saw her clasp her hands and so stand in silent prayer, then tear the blue apron off, and raise herself to spring into the waves. . . . She awoke from a long, deathlike swoon in my room in the village inn, where I had had her brought, careless of the remarks of the village people, whose scorn mattered nothing to me. When she revived, I told her who I was, and that at present she was just to look upon me as her doctor.

" She just did all I asked her, and, much to my joy, soon fell into a sound, strengthening sleep. This gave me time to make the necessary inquiries about her. My host of the village inn, who also was the girl's master, told me all her history, with much unnecessary embroidery and many a clumsy joke. It was not difficult for me to separate the truth from the unsavoury prejudice the man seemed to delight in, and the story of this poor girl may be told as follows.

" The village in which I had been able to save this human life was the girl's birthplace, a place which, in consequence of its solitary and isolated position, had fostered amongst its inhabitants some isolated and peculiar ideas and habits; so that—as it often happens—certain sayings, habits, and jokes were peculiar to just this particular secluded hamlet. The girl lost her parents, poor farming people, early, and was brought up as a daughter by an old novel-reading but good and dear lady of the manor in the neighbourhood, who wanted some one to cheer her in her old age. This old lady, with her novels, naturally influenced the girl to some extent, and Jette soon began to assimilate the slow poison of the mixed and cheap literature which, in her romantic loneliness, was all nature could feed on. Strict seclusion, a total lack of knowledge of the world, and want of every intellectual support helped further in the development of a lively imagination in the wrong direction. Suddenly Jette's benefactress died, before yet she had provided for her adopted daughter. For the second time Jette found herself an orphan, and this on the threshold of the most active development of her nature. Left to her fate, used to an atmosphere of culture and to kindly treatment, she now hired herself as waiting-maid to the small but well-ordered inn of the village where I had stopped. Here travellers descending the ancient river Rhine often stopped and stayed, and Jette, with her exceptional education, soon made herself popular with them. and also with mine host and his wife.

" One day there arrived—so she told me herself, after I had sufficiently assured her that all her story was well known to me—an artist, a painter—a young man, curly haired, with ' Vandyke ' moustache and beard, fiery eyes, high forehead over which the broad-brimmed hat sat recklessly on abundant locks, vivacious in his bearing, and sincere in his talk—a Viennese. It was a case of immediate, mutual attraction. As the artist was a companion to a rich nobleman, the length of his stay in the village did not lie within his inclination. However, it was long enough for two portraits to be painted, two rings to be exchanged, and a troth to be pledged hurriedly—a troth that was to poison the life's happiness of poor Jette. The painter left—against his will and broken-hearted as he said—yet he left, and was far away, far over hill and dale, when rumour first began to tell the world of poor deceived Jette's shame. Soon the anguish of her soul began to torture her. Then—afterwards—when, weak and ill, for weeks only just able to creep about the house a broken creature, suffering many a slighting look and many a hard word, there came the day—it was the Sunday of my arrival in the village—when for the first time she was again to set her foot into the open. In the church close by the organ already invited the village folk to worship. A sweet longing seemed to impel her to make an effort to throw off her heart the burden of sin, to direct her first steps to holy ground, there to repent and to purify herself. She begged for her Sunday clothes. Silently the second serving-maid of the inn pushed towards her the chair whereon they lay. Already had she put the simple skirt upon her slender figure, already the neat headdress graced her beautiful hair, already was her hand extended for the apron of dazzling whiteness, when she noticed, and shrank back terrified, that instead of an apron of pure white, one of glaring blue had been laid out for her. Now came to her the terrible meaning of an expression that she had heard referred to as a frightful insult, without understanding its true significance.

" There ruled in the village of her birth, as well as in Bavaria and several other German provinces, an old custom, that a girl who had been guilty of the same sin as poor Jette must never again wear a white, but, on the contrary, always a blue apron. The purport of this custom is to keep their guilt continually before their eyes: in church no one will admit these outcasts to their pew; on festive occasions they will not find any companions; at dances no partners will seek them out; they have to put up with every coarse joke; and should they attempt to complain of their lot people just turn away and say, ' Oh, let her be, she wears the blue apron.'

" Jette had to learn from bitter experience how terribly severe a simple article of dress, of an otherwise unimportant colour, could

render her punishment. How retribution will use the apparently insignificant to chastise the more severely its victim! No one listened to her entreaties and prayers for just the oldest, the worst apron to be found in the house, if only white, and so she needs had to put on—and she did so almost unconsciously—the dreaded blue cloth. After a while she appeared to take heart and stepped into the street to mix with the lasses now on their way to church, seemingly to try to smuggle herself, the unclean with the clean, into the place of worship. The village maidens in their aprons of splendid whiteness, mostly all of them Jette's playmates in early youth, sauntered along in happy pairs, in intimate companionship and solemn edification. She could not resist her longing further; the knowledge of her convalescence after the long weary battle with death, the hope that her friends in the joy at beholding her once more would have no room left in their hearts for reproaches, led her to forget for the moment completely the outward and visible sign of her disgrace. How terribly and painfully she was reminded of it I myself witnessed, as I have told you already.

" While waking and sleeping this poor creature still battled with her painful and hard yet not undeserved punishment, I broke to her gently my intention of returning to Vienna, and taking her with me, to entrust to her care in all honour the management of my house.

" My simple nature, my unaffected pity, my sudden proposition —in short, everything decided her to come with me. I kept my word to her absolutely, so much I may say in my own praise; she does not want for or miss anything here, with me—nothing—except——"

" Perhaps the chance to see him," I interrupted, " who is the cause of all her misfortune."

" This chance is given her more so here than anywhere else," rejoined the doctor. " The painter hailed from Vienna, and his heart, so she still insists to this day, was not bad. If I should be able to do more for her, dear friend, than I first intended! What do you say to that? "

" I say that it would be one of your most celebrated cases, doctor. To heal a broken heart, what a splendid triumph! I have never yet done any detective work, but if I could trace this young, curly-headed painter fellow of the fiery eyes and the ' Vandyke ' beard I would try to cultivate his friendship. In an hour of mutual confidences I would touch his heart, and the tenderest place in his conscience, and try and recall to his memory the enormous debt of his past which he left unpaid, the betrayal of an innocent girl. If he then should tell me that his only wish in life was to atone for his error, how gladly I would extend to him a

friendly hand and lead him to you, dear doctor. Such a balancing of the fates would be a heavenly thing! ”

Silently the doctor and I shook hands; just then Jette entered the room. She may have noticed that our eyes were moist as we looked up at her.

FRITZ REUTER
1810–1874

HIS SERENITY AND THE THUNDERSTORM

On his way to school the Konrektor felt so cheery and good-natured that his pupils might have expected to have a good day. As he stepped into the schoolroom he had the pleasant surprise of seeing a complete Roman battle before him, which his precious boys were carrying out in honour of Livy, and probably to give him an unexpected pleasure, and the noise they made was as natural as if the room were full of genuine Roman soldiers and genuine horses. It was all very well for boys, but it was not quite befitting the quiet which is supposed to reign in a schoolroom; nor was it the best means of allaying the flushed spirits of a schoolmaster who had his own private troubles to contend with. The Herr Konrektor sat down on his platform, opened his Homer, and when the noise had somewhat subsided, he gave vent to his ire: "Now listen, you dunces; first learn something, then you'll be better able to play heroes! Last time we stopped just before the splendid passage where Hector said good-bye to his dear wife Andromache, and she exhorts him—

"Δαιμόνιε, says she; φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος, οὐδ' ἐλεαίρεις, says she; but it's hardly worth while to read anything so fine to you scatterbrained dolts. παῖδά τε νηπίαχον. says she; καὶ ἔμ' ἄμμορον, ἦ τάχα χήρη, says she. Karl Wendt, confound you, if you don't stop talking I'll stand you up by my platform, and then it'll be *my* turn to have a talk with you. σεῦ ἔσομαι. says she, τάχα γάρ σε κατακτανέουσιν Ἀχαιοὶ πάντες ἐφορμηθέντες, says she; ἐμοὶ δέ κε κέρδιον εἴη σεῦ ἀφαμαρτοῦσῃ, and so on, says she.—Langnickel, you begin."

And Langnickel cleared his throat once or twice and nudged his neighbours right and left with his elbows, as much as to say: "Fellows, help me; I'm in an awful fix."

"Well," said the Konrektor, "how long before you're ready? Δαιμόνιε—what does that mean?"

"*Oh, thou monster!*" said Langnickel, looking at the Herr Konrektor very doubtfully to see what he would say.

"It's more likely you are a monster. The next, go on," said the

Konrektor, pointing to Karl Siemsen. "Well, Karl! Eh? the word's not easy; how do we call a fellow that can do more than ordinary folks?"

"A Tausendsasa," said Karl.

"Well, I never! We may say that for a joke, but do you suppose Hector's wife felt much like joking just then? Nay, she is scolding him. You madcap you, says she, bridle your pluck! says she. Have you no pity for your little boy—she means her little Astyanax that she has on her arm—and for poor luckless me, says she, who will soon enough be a widow? For how long will it be, says she, before the Achæans pitch in on you and kill you, and what is left to me but sorrow when I sit here without you? says she. Well, here I am translating the whole of Homer for you. Go ahead, Karl Siemsen!" he exclaimed. Then the door was opened, and one of his Serene Highness's lackeys came in.

"Herr Konrektor, his Highness wants to know if you think we'll get a thunderstorm to-day."

Now this was the last straw for the Konrektor's patience. He turned upon the fellow in a mad choler and shouted, "Yes! Go and tell his Highness we'll get seven."

"Seven?" asked the lackey, looking blank and walking toward the door, and the Konrektor called after him: "Yes, seven! Tell him we'll get seven!"

The first lesson was over and the second had begun; it was Latin, and there was Virgil's *Bucolica* to translate.

The Herr Konrektor had in the meantime taken a look at the weather, and now he was quite sure there was a storm coming up; his pupils had taken a look at his face, and they also knew for sure that there was a storm brewing; they were only doubtful where the lightning would strike. This question was about to be solved in a drastic manner when his Serenity sent the lackey once more:

"Herr Konrektor, his Highness wants you to come to him at once. The storm is coming mighty fast."

"Tell his Highness," cried the Konrektor in a rage, and was about to add, "to remember me to his grandmother," but he recalled himself and said: "First I must be through school, then I'll come."

At the palace things had gone on queerly enough for a while; his most Serene Highness walked up and down in his apartments with pale cheeks, as if he were the walking ghost of the deceased Henry of the Three Oaks; the footmen stood in the corners and along the walls silent and fearful like the stage mimes when Dame Macbeth walks about washing her hands; the gentleman of the bedchamber, Von Knüppelsdörp, carefully bolted all the windows and doors, and looked as if he were gagged.

" Rand," called his Highness in an undertone, " smoke is a good conductor. Are all the fires put out? "

" Yes, your Highness, all except the kitchen—you know the dinner has to be cooked."

" We shall not dine to-day. Tell them to throw water on the fire."

" Dear me, your Highness," Rand began, for fast-days were not much to his taste, not even when there was a thunderstorm.

" Do you hear what I say? " cried his Highness with such alacrity that he frightened himself.

" And there shall be no bells pulled; the sound is a good conductor," he added in a lower tone.

" The sound, your Highness? "

" Confound you, fool! I—I say! It *might* draw, you know! " whispered his Highness snappishly.

" Humph," said Rand to himself, looking out of the window with one eye, " we can afford to be cross; the storm isn't high yet; later on we'll be more polite."

" Goodness me," said his Highness nervously, " why doesn't the Konrektor come? "

" Good gracious! what good is the Konrektor? He's no more able to——"

" He *must* be able to, he *must*! Here, get these buckles off from my shoes; metal is a good conductor. Is all in order in my cabinet? "

" Yes," growled Rand, looking at the floor while trying to take the buckles off, " we've put up all the mummery, and the carpenter says it looks for all the world like a bird-cage."

" Gracious goodness! Did you hear that? Did you hear it, I say? It's here already! Where can the Konrektor be? I am going into my cabinet. Send for the Konrektor. Don't go so fast! Don't go so fast! The lightning will catch. Oh, goodness me! " he said quite tremulously; " and here I am calling so loud! "

The lackey met the Konrektor on the market-place, the door was opened, just a trifle, according to the Duke's orders, so that there should be no draught, and the Konrektor crowded in with his fox-tail and the rest of it. He now entered his Highness's cabinet, and the sight he saw put him at first quite out of countenance. For a moment he stood bewildered in the door, and stared into the cabinet open-mouthed, then all at once he broke into a perfect roar of laughter.

" What the devil have we here? Begging your Grace's pardon! But what in the name of goodness can this mean? "

And Rand laughed too, and said, " Ay, you may well say so! "

I don't know but what I should have forgotten the dutiful respect I owed his most Serene Highness if I had been called upon to behold what the Konrektor beheld. Right in the middle of the

room there was a small platform resting on the necks of bottles, on top of that a sort of pavilion made of glass that came down to the floor, and roofed over with a light-blue silk tent, that looked like a parasol for fifteen persons, and in this remarkable affair sat his Highness in his innocent terror, clothed in a yellow silk dressing-gown, with a green silk nightcap on his head, and with a pair of shoes on his feet varnished with red sealing-wax. He looked for all the world like a handsome canary with a green top-knot, that had been put in a cage to sing a sweet song; and he might have begun singing at any moment if only he had felt less down at the mouth.

In his quality as sovereign lord he would doubtless have sung a right testy little song at the Konrektor for laughing, the more so as he had a crow to pick with him anyway for his matrimonial intentions, had not a sudden stroke of lightning interrupted his Highness's sing-song. "What nonsense are you——?" and now came the lightning, and he clapped his silk handkerchief over his eyes—"Mercy on us!" and he peeped out from behind the handkerchief, listening for the thunder, and when it came he stopped up his ears and exclaimed again, "Mercy on us!"

The Konrektor had stopped laughing by this time, and examined the cage from before and behind, and his Highness looked at him in an uncertain way, and asked at last:

"Well, what do you say? Will it do? Glass, silk, and"—here he raised one of his legs—"here is sealing-wax; and I have had everything taken out that's made of metal."

"Ay," said the Konrektor, "I dare say it's all right, your Highness; what man can do has been done; but, begging your pardon, the gold ducal crown that's up on top of the throne you are sitting on you've forgotten."

"Didn't I tell you so? Didn't I tell you so? That ass, Rand. Oh, mercy on us!" for it lightened again.

"Sheep-headed fool, you! bring another chair! I don't want any ducal honours. When there's such a storm as this I'm no more than another man—mercy on us!" and he held his hands over his ears. "Eh, Konrektor?"

The Konrektor said he believed it; but the throne with the crown on it might stay there; they could wrap up the crown in a silk handkerchief.

After that his Highness ordered Rand to go out and take a look at the weather. Rand did it, and came back: "The storm is over, but there's another one all ready to burst, and it looks mighty grim."

"Rand, bring another chair in my weather-temple for the Konrektor."

"Oh, your Highness," said the Konrektor, "I don't need to come in."

"Ay, but *I* need you in here; but you can't come in like that; you'll drag in the lightning. Rand, another silk dressing-gown and nightcap, and the red-waxed shoes!"

Resistance was useless, he had to give in; and in a short time he stood there in a black nightcap and a bright orange bed-gown and red shoes; and he stood like a sorcerer in olden times, who might be supposed to have changed an unfortunate prince into a canary-bird, and put him into a glass box, where it was likely he would have to stay for ever, for naught but the sweet kiss of a beauteous fairy upon his beak could ransom him, and his Highness was possessed of a holy horror of kissing, and there was no beauteous fairy near, for Rand, who was the only other person about, could not possibly figure as such.

When the old sorcerer sat beside his enchanted victim, his Highness ordered Rand out, because the exhalations of so many persons might draw the lightning, but told him to put his head in at the door from time to time and give the news concerning the weather; and Rand was quite willing, for now he could run over to the baker's wife and have some talk.

"What say you, Konrektor? Is it safe now?" asked his Highness.

"Ay, so far as I can see."

"But is it *quite* safe?"

"Well, your Highness, what man can do has been done; but what are mortal measures against the will of our Lord God?"

"That's what I say," exclaimed his Highness; "that fool the carpenter was to have made it round, and he made it square. Corners always draw lightning."

"What good would that do? If our Lord God sees best He can blow away the whole of Neu-Brandenburg in a moment. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah."

"Goodness gracious! Yes, I know it, I——" Just here Rand put his head in at the door: "There's another one coming, and the baker's wife says——"

"Fool, I don't want to know what that impertinent woman says." Rand retired. "That woman has a lot to say; she says too—goodness gracious! she says you are going to get married, Konrektor. But I forbid you. I'll never set eyes on you again. I'd banish you from Court."

"I esteem your Highness as my liege lord," said the Konrektor, quietly getting up, "but whether I marry or don't marry ought to be all the same to you, and I won't brook interference from any man. If you want to banish me from Court you can do it, that's in your power; but I can also go of my own free will, that's in my power. I have the honour of bidding you farewell."

"Mercy on us! Do stay here; you're the only comfort I have. Oh, goodness gracious!"

Here Rand put his head in at the door.

" Your Highness, this one is going to be pretty bad; the storm can't come across the lake, and the baker's wife says——"

" You hare-brained dolt, I don't want to know what she says. Shut the door and bolt it on the outside, so that he can't get out."

" Well, your Highness," said the Konrektor, taking off his sorcerer's habit and donning his own honest coat, " you can hold me by force—that was a terrific clap! "

" Mercy on us!—yes, that it was. Do come in here again."

" Nay, your Highness, I'm not afraid of lightning," said the staunch old fellow, and gave his liege lord a quiet look. " I fear God, my judge, when I stand before Him as a miserable sinner, but I do not fear God, my father, for He knows what is good for me, and if He calls me to Himself by a stroke of lightning and without any suffering, then I know that it was an act of mercy, and I thank Him for it."

There was another awful clap, lightning and thunder falling almost simultaneously, and his Serene Highness screamed aloud.

" Konrektor, I'll grant ye a favour. What shall it be? "

" I need only God's favour; I don't need any man's favour, for all he may be a prince. Princely favour is the crutch that lame justice leans on, and when princes are gracious they are either trying to make up for past injustice and reap thanks for it, or they are about to commit some new injustice."

" You're growing mighty bold. I'll show you what princely disfavour is! " shouted his Highness in sore ire, for there had been no thunder for some time. " I'll show you——"

Then Rand put in his head. " Your Highness, the lightning struck a poplar on the embankment, the baker's wife says, and there's another storm coming up."

" Konrektor, do you think upon something that will help us! "

" How can *I* think upon anything, your Highness? At such times when our Lord God is nearer than at others it is best to examine ourselves closely, and think of all the wrong one has done, and firmly resolve to undo it—that will give us courage and comfort."

" There is no man I have ever wronged," exclaimed his Highness hastily; but the storm was drawing nigh, and he covered his face with his handkerchief once more, and cried, " Goodness gracious! "

" Well, your Highness, I imagine it's much the same with you as it is with the rest of us; or is that no wrong when you imprison your courier Halsband for no fault of his? "

" My courier? He is my servant; how can a prince—mercy on us!—how can a prince be in the wrong against his own servant? "

And again there was a flash of lightning, and his Highness disappeared behind his handkerchief. "Mercy on us! Let him go! Let the fellow go!"

"Ay, your Highness, that's all very good; but you must take the disgrace off from his shoulders as well."

"Mercy on us!" cried his Highness, stopping his ears because of the thunder. "I'm to ask his pardon, am I? No, no! The fellow——"

Rand appeared. "This will be a good one."

"Run and let Halsband out of prison," said his Highness.

"And," said the Konrektor, "give me pen and ink, and some paper."

"Here is paper and pen; but our ink is dried up. We're not much given to writing, except when the cashier is here."

"That's a fact," said his Highness. "Mercy on us! Go and buy some ink immediately." The ink came, and the Konrektor wrote.

"Good gracious," said his Highness to himself, "how can the fellow write in this storm!"

The Konrektor got him to sign it.

"Don't you feel a vast deal better," he said, "after this good deed?"

"Not a bit of it," said his Highness; "first the storm must be over."

The sky was clearing. Rand's head appeared again. "Now it's all over; the baker's wife says we had seven storms."

His Highness took breath once more, and said to himself, "Seven storms! And he knew it before, the insolent old fellow, with his confounded speeches! What becomes of the deference due to the prince from his subject, I'd like to know? But I can't do without him; he's too well posted about the weather."

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

1812–1882

TONELE

THREE girls are sitting in the shade of a cherry-tree in a meadow near the cross-roads leading to Muehringen and Ahldort. No cart is on the roads, no plough moves in the fields. The stillness of the Sabbath holds the country-side.

On a distant hill to the right, where the chapel of an ancient convent stands out against the siege of time, a bell rings home the good people who have been worshipping there. In a little dell, still to the right, yellow fields of rape lie amid stretches of corn, and beyond is the Jewish cemetery. But you can only see its four weeping willows, standing at the corner of the distant hill, under which sleep a grandmother, mother, and five children lost in a burning house.

A large cross, painted red and white, stands amid the flowery fruit-trees. On one side of the main road a pine forest rises sombre, with its ranges of red boles; on the other side is a higher glade of elm, oak, and beech.

The three girls sit chatting, and now and then one of them breaks into an old Black Forest country song, in which the others join with a fine feeling for harmony. In the cherry-tree above them a finch warbles at the top of his voice to their singing. When they stop or talk quietly, he becomes silent. Bang! A shot. Away flies the finch, and the startled country lasses look around.

In the dell, the forest ranger from Muehringer picks up a bird, pulls a feather from its tail, sticks the feather in his hat, and puts the bird in his game-bag. Calling his dog, he walks across the fields, the gun over his shoulder, looking a very manly, comely fellow.

"He might have spared the poor bird on a Sunday!" said Tonele.

"So I should think," Barbele remarked. "The rangers are not Christians. All they can do is to kill innocent animals and shut anybody in prison who takes any of their timber."

"Old Granny Ursul told me once," said Brigittle, the youngest of the girls, "that a ranger is compelled to kill some living thing every day."

Meanwhile the ranger had almost come up with them. With one

accord the three girls began to sing quietly. They did not want to be spoken to.

"Good afternoon, girls! But why sing so quietly?" he said, stopping.

Tonele and Brigittle began to laugh; but Barbele, with ready wit, answered saucily, "Good afternoon, Ranger! We are singing only for our own pleasure, not for others. We hear ourselves quite well."

"Brr," said the ranger, "what a sharp tongue!"

"Sharp or blunt," answered the girl, "makes no difference. Those who don't like it need not listen." But Tonele nudged her and whispered to her not to be rude.

The ranger heard, and looking down pleasantly said, "Oh, never mind! I can stand any amount of chaff."

The girls were a little embarrassed, and, getting up, linked arms and turned towards the village. But the ranger was not to be put off so easily.

"May I walk with you?"

Barbele again quickly took him up.

"This is the high road and it is wide enough," she exclaimed.

The young ranger was now half-inclined to leave the girls alone, but thought it a man's part to put up with woman's whimsies; he walked along with them without saying another word. Tonele, to put him at his ease again, asked, "Where are you off to on a Sunday?"

"I am on my way to Horb," he answered. "If you girls would care to come along with me, I should be delighted to treat you to some Horb wine and cakes."

Tonele blushingly refused, and Barbele, once more taking command, told him:

"We prefer to drink white wine from the spring, and that also costs us nothing." And having now reached the village, she added, "Ranger, your nearest way runs backward."

He had a sharp retort ready, but, suppressing it, answered, "I like to look an honest village and honest people in the face!" He could not resist turning his back on Barbele as he said that.

Walking along the village High Street he asked Tonele her name, but again Barbele interposed. "Whatever she was christened." And as the ranger now turned to her, saying she was very clever, and asking, "And what is your age?" he got the usual reply, "As old as my little finger." But Tonele softly whispered to him, "My name is Tonele. Why do you ask?"

"Because I wanted very much to know."

Slowly they walked up the High Street. Then, on coming to a narrow branching lane, the three girls whispered to each other. In a moment they dispersed in different directions, and assembled

again shortly afterwards near the stone pit outside the village. The ranger laughed to himself, whistled to his dog, gripped the strap of his gun, and quickened his pace.

The girls discussed the young man for some time. Tonele rather took his part, remonstrating with Barbele for snapping him up in that fashion, seeing he was such a decent fellow. Barbele, however, said that such forward fellows must be kept in their place. Just because he was the ranger to Baron Muehringen, that was no reason for making up to every girl he came across. Besides, what would their boys, Sepp and Kasper, say?

Their lively chatter was interrupted by the appearance of those two sturdy lads, who had been looking for them in the meadow. Barbele related all that had happened and much besides—sharp repartees that only now occurred to her, and that she would not have had the courage to use had she thought of them before.

The lads agreed with all she said, and Sepp took Tonele's arm and Kasper that of Barbele, Brigittle linking herself by the side.

Sepp and Tonele made a fine couple. Both tall and slender, they looked striking when alone, and splendid when walking along arm in arm. Sepp held himself very straight, and his best clothes—short buck-skin breeches, long stockings, free knees, and fine green jacket—set off admirably his well-shaped figure.

After making their way towards the high ground above the village, they could see the ranger in the distance speaking to another forester of the Nordstetter district. Sepp even saw him pointing in their direction, and was about to shout a challenge towards him, but Tonele put her arms round his neck, and, kissing him, prevented it. Had Sepp heard what the ranger said, he would surely have carried out his intention and more, perhaps.

"Here she comes; what a fine girl! As handsome a lass as I have ever seen," he was telling his companion.

"Oh yes," was the reply, "it is Tonele right enough. A face like a Madonna, and wavy golden hair! Our old minister knew what was what when he asked her father to let her come to him as his cook. He got a sharp answer from the old man, I guess!"

As the others approached, the rangers separated and went away. The happy young people found a shady place at the edge of the clearing and spent the afternoon sweethearting. Only Brigittle, whose young man was away in the army, sat moodily by herself. But she made herself very useful towards the evening, by rearranging the hair and neckerchiefs of her friends, that had become rather tousled. Returning to the village, the girls and lads drew apart, and appeared, according to custom, with other friends, walking in long rows, each sex keeping to itself.

One row of girls had Tonele on the outside. Next to her strolled Marann, an unhappy maid whose face on one side was a deep blue

from temple to chin. It is said that shortly before her birth her mother rushed out to see the burning house where the seven people died who lie under the willows, and received such a terrible shock that it communicated itself to the unborn baby. Unexpectedly the ranger passed through the village on his return from Horb. Coming up to Tonele, he cried, " Good-evening, girls! Can't I now stroll along beside you? "

" No, no! " answered Tonele. " Please go in front with the boys. It would be wrong for you to come with us."

The ranger was pleased with her tone, and walked ahead with the lads. But near the Red Eagle they all stopped. For the convent bell rang out the evensong. All the fellows uncovered, and, like the girls, murmured a prayer, ending with the sign of the cross. This was hardly done when the ranger called out, " Good-night, everybody," and walked away.

The girls were chaffing Tonele about the ranger when Sepp came up. Hearing the talk he stopped dead, bit his pipe-stem savagely, and closed his fists tightly. He didn't say a word, but looked daggers at Tonele. As they all dispersed he walked with Tonele towards her house in utter silence.

" What is the ranger to you? " he said sharply.

" Nothing."

" What were you two talking about, then? "

" Whatever does one talk about? "

" Then I ask you never to say another word to him."

" I don't allow anybody to dictate to me with whom I may speak."

" You stuck-up, false thing! "

" If you think that, well and good, I don't mind."

Both kept silent during the rest of the walk. Then Tonele said good-night to him and went in. He did not answer, but remained outside her house till the end of the evening, thinking she would surely come out again to make it up. She did not.

All the following week they never spoke to each other. Indeed, Sepp avoided the girl. But returning from the fields one afternoon he met Barbele and offered her a lift home. She returned his kindness by giving him a good lecture about his silly behaviour towards Tonele. He took it to heart, and, waiting afterwards for Tonele at the village pump, helped her with the water, and made up the quarrel while seeing her home.

" But you must not speak to the ranger again," he told her.

" As often as I like," she answered. " I am not a child, and I know what I may do or not do."

" But," he insisted, " you need not speak to him unless you have to."

" That is quite right. But I will not be dictated to."

So peace was restored and the old delightful courtship was resumed. They loved each other more than ever. The ranger had no occasion to come to the village: the harvest was on; and in the autumn Sepp was only called up for a short term of military service. After that they would get married.

Tonele had not met the ranger again since the Sunday in spring. But while she was cutting wheat with Sepp in the dell, a few days before her lover was to join the colours, the ranger passed the field. Seeing her, he called out, " Is it cutting well? " Not having seen him approach, Tonele was rather startled and never answered. She kept on with her reaping, but Sepp, looking up, called out, " Yes, thanks! " And kneeling on a shear, he twisted the straw rope especially tightly round it, biting his lips and wishing it was the ranger he had under his knee.

It only wanted then three days to Barbele's wedding; and two days afterwards Sepp and Kasper had to depart for the manœuvres. During this time Sepp had resolved to be a model sweetheart and to enjoy life to the full. On the day of the wedding he was particularly boisterous, and engaged the band on the spot for his own wedding, with two trumpeters, for, being in the Guards, he was fond of brass instruments. In the evening, at the dance, the sudden appearance of the ranger somewhat upset his balance. His rival made straight for Tonele to ask her for the first dance, and Sepp flared up, and not giving her time to answer, burst out, " Already engaged! "

" I should think the lady can speak for herself," replied the ranger.

Tonele then interfered, and, taking Sepp's hand, turned to the ranger and said, " We will have the next dance together."

Sepp was furious; and when he afterwards saw his girl and his rival dancing together, he swore to himself that neither he nor Tonele should dance another dance that night. However, Barbele, the bride, asked the angry, sullen lad to come and dance with her, and as it is impossible to refuse the bride, he had to do his duty. While they danced, Barbele gave him a good dressing-down for his stupid jealousy, telling him that it would serve him right if, in consequence of his boorish behaviour, Tonele got to love the ranger. " He at least behaves like a gentleman," said Barbele.

Sepp laughed and admitted she was right, and determined to behave properly in future and during the evening. As he sat with Tonele at the table he drank to the ranger's health and told Tonele to clink glasses with him. The ranger bowed low towards Tonele, but hardly nodded to Sepp, who, however, did not mind and rather fancied he had scored that time.

The party lasted far into the morning, and when at last it broke up Sepp saw his sweetheart home. They were both excited, and

kissed and hugged each other, Tonele resting happily and closely in his strong arms. He began to talk of the ranger again, but she put her hand over his mouth, saying:

" Leave the ranger alone! You are everything in the world to me; I love you, only you! " Sepp was overjoyed, and pressing his lips to her cheeks told her, " I just could bite you."

" Then bite," said Tonele.

A scream! Sepp had really bitten her, and blood was running down her cheeks. Putting her hands up to her face and feeling the wound, she gave Sepp a fierce push that sent him flying down backwards. Then she rushed into the house screaming, and soon every one was awake and running about. Old Ursul was fetched, and before putting on healing herbs, wanted to send for Sepp to suck out the wound. This, she said, was the only way to counteract any poison that might have entered the flesh. But Tonele swore she would rather die than let Sepp touch her again. The herbs were changed and Tonele groaned incessantly.

The next day everybody in the village crowded in. For the tale had soon spread, and from a mere bite, the attack had increased to something tremendous. Sepp also called, but Tonele at once began to rave, and would not see him, and insisted upon his leaving the house immediately. In despair he went to Barbele, who, after giving him a sound talking to, promised to do her best for him. But all her efforts were in vain. Tonele refused absolutely to see Sepp or to speak to him again in her life.

After a fortnight she left the house for the first time, and almost the first man she met was the ranger. It happened just outside the village, and he asked kindly after her wound. " How are you, dear Tonele? " he said. " May I see the hurt place? "

She blushed and felt quite hot, but pushed the bandage to one side to let him see the spot.

" It was unpardonable to disfigure a beautiful girl like you in this way," he said in astonishment. " But don't worry too much about it. To me you are still the loveliest girl I know, here or in any other village."

He spoke very sincerely and kindly, and Tonele was touched and deeply grateful. " Oh, you must not say those things," she told him.

" But I mean every word," he said, adding in an impressive voice, " I would marry you right now." She blushed again, and walking quickly away over the fields, called out, " You must not say any more if you wish us to remain good friends."

The ranger was well content to remain her good friend—for the present. Shortly afterwards he heard to his delight that Tonele was coming to Muehringen to the wedding of her cousin. He got his sister to be particularly friendly with the young girl, and they

quickly took to each other. Tonele appeared for the first time without her bandage, and the scar seemed to make her face only more interesting without spoiling its beauty. At the dance the ranger looked after the charming girl in a very attentive way, and in the evening he took her to the castle of the Baron, his master, where a theatrical performance had been arranged in the Baron's private theatre. It was the first play the country lass had ever seen, and she was overawed by what was really a crude performance, and by the fine people of the castle who attended it.

On the way home Tonele leant closely on her companion. She felt very grateful towards him for giving her such a splendid and wonderful treat. It seemed to her as if he had arranged everything solely for her, and she was happy. But the ranger too was very happy, for she promised to meet him next Sunday in the little beech glade near the old church.

In his manœuvres the ranger was certainly happier than Sepp was in his military operations in a distant garrison town. Before Sepp obtained his discharge there he received a letter of dismissal from Tonele's hands.

His first step, on his return home, was to Tonele's house. He found her sitting by her spinning-wheel in the parlour with her parents. But she never even looked at him, or came to the table when he proudly spread on it his army discharge.

He soon left and went to Barbele to hear all the news. Barbele told him that she had quarrelled with Tonele on account of the girl's friendliness with the ranger. Unable to control his feelings he tore up his discharge and dashed in a terrible rage out of the house.

Aimlessly he wandered about until the evening. Then, finding himself near the meadow where we first saw the three girls, he sat down under the cherry-tree, leafless now and swaying in the wind, put his bare head into his hands, and was lost in his anguish, neither hearing nor seeing anything. Suddenly he looked up, icy cold and shivering, and as he rose stiffly his eye caught in the distance two figures, and he also heard the low barking of a dog. Yes, it was the ranger coming from the village, and beside him he saw a white apron—it was the two of them—Tonele and her new sweetheart. She had seen him to the end of the village. They stood for a while, then the girl went back.

As the ranger drew up with him Sepp called out roughly, " Good-evening."

" Good-evening to you," replied he.

" I have an account to settle with you," said Sepp sharply.

" Ah! Master Sepp," the ranger exclaimed, " when did you come back? "

" Too soon for you anyway! Let us draw straws for Tonele, to

see who of us is to have her, and if I lose I must have the loan of your gun."

The ranger calmly told him he would not draw straws.

Sepp jumped at him, and, gripping his throat with one hand and his gun with the other, cried, "Then I'll draw the soul out of your body, you thief."

"Seize him, boy!" screamed the ranger with half-choked voice to his dog. But the young giant of a farmer landed the dog such a kick that it flew yelping into the ditch. A mighty struggle went on for the gun. The ranger freed himself slightly while Sepp kicked at the dog, and now they held each other by the throat, exerting all their strength for the possession of the gun. Suddenly it went off, and the ranger staggered backwards into the ditch. He groaned twice and then was quiet. Sepp bent over him to see if he was still breathing.

The shot had been heard by Tonele. She came running up the road with a frightened face.

"There! there!" called Sepp to her. "There lies your fine new lover! Now marry him!"

Tonele stood terrified. She could not utter a word. She did not know what to say or do. Then she said quietly, "Sepp, you have ruined yourself as well as me."

"What is it to me?" he said; "I am done with the world," and he slowly walked towards the sombre pine forest. Nobody in the village ever heard of him again.

On the way to Muehringen, near the fruit-tree plantation, stands a rude stone cross to the memory of the ranger from Muehringen who there lost his life. Poor Tonele, after a long period of sorrow and illness, died also.

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

CLUMSY

I CAN still see you, dear old Clumsy, with your short fair hair, your broad heavy features, large blue eyes, and that mouth of yours which was always more or less open. I also vividly remember your scant, queer get-up—white shirt, red braces, and short black linen breeches, useful if quaint. On Sundays, of course, you held your own with the best of them—fur cap, blue jacket with large buttons, scarlet waistcoat, short yellow leather breeches, white stockings and black shoes, and sometimes even a scarlet carnation behind the ear.

Clumsy was not his right name, although everybody called him so, except his mother, Maria, and a few of the children. He lived close to us, and as the village kiddies were generally split up into several bands waging war on one another, this was an advantage. For since Clumsy was our great friend and ally, we were usually quite safe from attack at our end of the village when Aloys—that is Clumsy—was about.

Aloys was of an age when he, together with the other village lads of his years, began to be a power. Every evening they would gather by the Eagle Inn and chaff the passing country girls, or stroll through the High Street singing and whistling. Most of them had already bought one of those short pipes with large china-head bowls, and though they generally held them unlit between their teeth, now and then one lad occasionally ventured to light up, and proudly and smilingly puffed away, however bad he felt.

Aloys, too, had begun to smoke, but only at home in his bedroom. One Sunday evening, however, he took his pipe out with him, and was unmercifully chaffed by his friends. One of them snatched it away, and in passing round it somehow got lost in the crowd. Aloys did not argue the matter, but snatched at his nearest friend's fur cap, and dashed away with that into the house of his aunt, Mistress Bomueller, whom he generally visited of an evening. There his hatless friend soon brought the wandering pipe.

He was greatly attached to his aunt, and more so to her eldest daughter Marannele. Neither used his nickname in addressing him; they always called him Aloys. In the morning when he had seen to his own two cows and calves he always walked over to his aunt's. Marannele would open the gate to him with a simple

" Good morning," and he would walk straight to the stables and prepare fresh fodder for her two cows and her two oxen. As he went about his work of straightening and cleaning up he would talk to the cattle, and they knew him so well that they would watch him and look round at him. Particularly friendly was the fine piebald, long-horned cow in the corner, whom he had reared from a calf. As he rubbed her down she would turn round and lick his hand, and look at him as long as he was in the byre. Next Aloys pumped the trough in the yard full of fresh, clear water, and while the cattle came out to drink he cleaned the stable, so as to have everything ready when Marannele came to milk.

She would say, " Aloys, you are a dear boy." He never looked at her, but only brushed the floor all the harder; for he was very shy.

After that he went to the outhouse to cut enough fodder to last for the rest of the day, did various other odd jobs, and at last went into the house to fill the kitchen buckets at the pump in the yard, and to split wood if any was required. Finally he appeared in the parlour, where Marannele brought in the large dish with soup, set it in the middle of the table, folded her hands and said grace. They all ate from the big dish, and sometimes Aloys would help himself at the place where Marannele ladled. Meantime not a word was spoken, and when the dish was emptied and grace said once more he made his way home.

Thus the years passed and Aloys was now nineteen. At his last birthday Marannele gave him a shirt, not only cut and sewn by herself, but made from hemp which she herself had spun and woven. Aloys was delighted, and in spite of the winter cold he would have gone about the streets in his shirt sleeves had he not been afraid of being chaffed. Recently he had got very touchy about the least thing.

This was largely due to the chipping he got from the mayor's new coachman. Joergli was a fine straight fellow who had been in the cavalry. On Sundays when he swaggered through the village in his spurs, his forage cap, and his leather-seated, cloth riding-breeches all the girls looked after him, and Aloys had often seen Marannele with her face glued to the curtains admiring the ex-cavalryman.

Aloys had many a bad hour over this, and often wished that he, too, had been a soldier, or at least that he, too, had the handling of horses like Joergli. In his mind there existed only three social classes: those who, like himself, were cow-keeping peasants, those who kept oxen only, and those who kept horses.

It was New Year's Day, and Joergli showed his superiority by being required to take the mayor's daughter with her friend Marannele for a sleigh ride. Though he was in despair Aloys managed to look cheerful as he assisted in the harnessing of the horses to the

sleigh; but after they had driven off and the crowd that had collected dispersed he slunk back home and tears of anger welled up in his eyes. The village seemed deserted without Marannele, and he did not know what to do with himself all that day.

For some time now Aloys had felt very miserable. In his mother's house, where the young girls of the village often assembled of an evening to spin and talk—they were all very fond of his mother, his father was dead long since—he had felt very much out of it; for when the village youths came in later in the evenings he seemed to be very much left to himself, while the others, and particularly Joergli, who could sing and " jodel " and tell stories to perfection, made all the running. After a few of these sociable nights at home and at other houses he began to tell himself, " Aloys! Buck up! You are now nineteen, and it is time you put yourself a little more forward; you must try to beat Joergli at his own game! "

Shortly after this at his own house he took the first big step forward. Marannele came with her new spinning-wheel, a beauty, inlaid with polished metal, and while the girls sat round in a circle, each one with her wheel, the hemp tied up with coloured ribbons, he brought in the usual dish of apples for the girls, to prevent their mouths getting too dry—they moistened the thread occasionally in their mouths—and seeing the new wheel immediately put his hand on the gilded ball at the top of the hemp-stick and recited the old piece of poetry in accordance with the custom. At first Marannele cast down her eyes in fear lest in his shyness he might stick in the middle of his recitation; but though he faltered and floundered he got safely through, and she gave him a resounding kiss, the usual ransom for the release of the hemp-stick. Aloys was overjoyed and proudly took his seat amongst the other youths. His peace of mind, however, did not last long, for Joergli had envied him that kiss and now asked Marannele to sing the ballad of the " Black-eyed Maid." She began at once, and though at first she faltered she soon recovered, and then Joergli fell in singing second part, and very finely too. Marannele now grew bolder and her voice became full and sweet, the support of Joergli's voice helping her, and they sang right through the six verses.

After the girls had spun five or six spindles the wheels were cleared out of the room, the chairs ranged round the wall, and they started a little dance. Joergli immediately danced with Marannele, and Aloys could only look on with set teeth, for he had never yet attempted dancing. However, Marannele came straight to him as soon as Joergli released her and said:

" Come along, Aloys, it is time you learned to dance! "

" But I can't, Marannele," he answered sulkily; " you know I can't! "

"Oh, Clum . . ., you silly boy," she said, "you will easily manage, and you must learn some time, so come along."

She dragged him up and they danced, and Aloys flung his legs about in such a comical way that everybody roared with laughter.

"Never mind, Aloys," she whispered, "I'll teach you when we are quite alone!"

The girls now took their lanterns which the boys had lit up for them, and they all made their way home. Aloys went with them and was pleased that Marannele avoided Joergli. When the boys had seen all the girls home they stopped for a parting chat, and, as Aloys turned to leave them, Joergli called after him, "You ought to have stopped with Marannele to-night, Clumsy!"

"You rascal!" Aloys called back, and the others laughed loudly as he went on his way.

The next morning as he watched Marannele at her milking he told her that she would have to be careful with Joergli, as he was a bad lot. She promised she would be, but told him that he ought to smarten himself up more and try to be as quick as Joergli, that he must not quarrel with him, but remain good friends. He promised her that, not without reluctance, however, and that was the reason why he had helped Joergli on New Year's Day to harness the horses.

Aloys was now in his twentieth year and liable to be called up for military service. He had long ago made up his mind to become a soldier, for he meant to outshine Joergli the cavalryman. So when the time came and the eligible young men of the village went up before the commission then sitting in the neighbouring town, he set out on his way delighted. He was—as we know—not a particularly brainy youth, but he had acquired plenty of acuteness, and having set his mind on the army he was quite saucy to the examining officers and surgeons. "Don't bother yourselves with punching me and listening to my breathing," he told them as he stood there in his nudity, "I shall pass all right; I'm thoroughly sound and healthy." The officials were annoyed at his sauciness; but the doctor quickly overlooked a slight defect in his sight, and he was enrolled.

As he returned home his mother met him and wept when she saw by the favours he wore that he had been taken. He ran up to her and soothed her, saying, "The year will soon be over, and our Xaver is quite able to look after our few fields and the cattle until my return. Don't cry, mother, for I wanted to be a soldier, and I tried hard to be taken on."

Aloys now set out with his companions, pipes alight, favours flowing in the breeze, singing through the village, and at the Eagle the celebrations lasted until late into the night.

Then his last day at home, the third, dawned. Early in the

morning he went to old Jacob's—his uncle's house—and there found Marannele, who now had to do all the work herself, busy in the byre. "Give me your hand, Marannele," he told her, "and promise me you'll not get married before I return." "Surely I'll do that," she exclaimed, and he bent down to her for his last kiss; the oxen and cows looked round at them as if they understood that something out of the way was going on, and Aloys went round and gave each one a parting pat.

Joergli had received permission from his master to take out the big cart and to drive all the recruits a good way towards Stuttgart, where they had to report themselves. So they left the village singing and shouting amidst the good wishes of the villagers. Food and drink were still being passed up to them as they went along the High Street; but finally the village was left behind, and they settled down on their way. Aloys had become very quiet. As they passed the well-known fields and meadows, each one made almost doubly dear by some remembrance of his youth or by his walks here and there with his dear Marannele, he sat in his place deep in thought. As they drove through the little county town the singing and "jodelling" started afresh, and after they gained the heights on the other side he began to look cheerful again; for there in the distance, not an hour away, lay his beloved Nordstetten. It looked so near in the beautifully clear air that he could see the yellow smithy with its green shutters, and he knew that two houses farther up the street stood Marannele's home. He waved his cap in the fulness of his heart.

Joergli took the party as far as Herrenberg, two hours' journey; the remaining distance they had to walk.

"Have you got a message to send back to Marannele?" he asked Aloys. "No!" he snapped. "And take care you don't talk to her, for she can't stand you!" He had rapped this out almost viciously, for had not Joergli just interrupted his most sacred thoughts, and had not he just been debating with himself whether he should send a message?

On their way the recruits fell in with a carter coming towards them and forced him to turn back and to take them some way on their journey. Aloys had been the ringleader in this matter out of sheer bravado, and we must give him this credit, he was the first to take out his purse to reward the carter as the latter was finally allowed to retrace his steps.

At last they arrived at the Tuebinger gate at Stuttgart, and there were met by a number of soldiers hailing from Nordstetten and the surrounding villages. "How are you, Clumsy?" several of them called out to Aloys, and amidst great laughter and merriment they were escorted to the barracks. To his great regret Aloys was refused for the cavalry and put into the infantry; but he proved

himself quite a good recruit and soon got into his stride. He made friends everywhere, and particularly with a painter in his company, who, poor himself, laid himself out to please this young farmer's son who often received well-assorted parcels from home, which he freely shared with his friend. He, in turn, showed his gratitude by painting Aloys in his full uniform, with the colours of the regiment in his hands, and though the picture looked very effective, yet the face might have done for any one in the regiment.

This picture Aloys had framed and sent home, asking his mother to show it to Marannele and to give it her if she thought proper. He also asked his mother to send him a nice parcel with butter, cakes, and meat, as they all delighted in the beautiful country fare, and not to forget to enclose a few yards of home-spun linen as a present for his colour-sergeant's wife. He told her, too, that he had learned to dance, and was becoming quite one of the smartest fellows in the regiment.

Then he received his parcel and a letter: "Mathes has sent five pounds for you from America, and writes that he could set you up on some of his land as soon as you would care to come out to him. Be a good fellow, don't get into any scrapes, and do your duty well. I showed Marannele your picture, but she said it wasn't you at all, and somehow she sulks with me and calls in but rarely." When he read this Aloys smiled and told himself, "I knew it, she doesn't even recognise me; that shows I have improved and am quite a different man now."

Then came the day when he received his first leave; he knew the fair was on at Nordstetten, and by giving various small presents to his sergeant he had succeeded in inducing that all-important person to procure him four days' leave. He left Stuttgart in full war paint and arrived at his home after darkness had fallen. His mother's house was the first he came to; there was a light, he knocked; and his mother called out, "Good gracious, a policeman!" He quickly allayed the fears of his mother by making himself known; she was delighted with the unexpected visit and with her fine soldier boy; and quickly busied herself with getting him some eggs for supper. While she went about the kitchen he stood by the fireplace and told her everything that had happened since he left. He also asked after Marannele; and why his picture was still in the parlour.

"My dear boy, please put her out of your mind; she is not worthy of your love," she told him hesitatingly.

"Mother, don't say things like that!" he cried, and the red light from the fire showed up his strong, determined face. "I know she is a good girl, and I love her!"

His mother then carried his supper into the parlour, and only then saw what a great change had taken place in her boy, what a

really handsome man he had grown; she lifted up his heavy helmet and almost cried over its cruel weight.

Next morning Aloys rubbed up his buttons, helmet and sword, and when the bells rang for the first time he stood ready for church and left the house when the second ringing started.

" Isn't this Clumsy? " he heard two boys whispering as he passed.

" Oh no; that's not him."

" But yes; it is he! " again exclaimed the first one.

Aloys threw them one of his severest looks and they immediately ran off. Everywhere he was greeted and welcomed; but he walked straight on, and as he passed Marannele's house no one was to be seen. He entered the church as the final bell rang, took off his leather gloves, and dipped his finger-tips into the holy water. He looked about anxiously, stopped at the door and looked amongst the newcomers, but saw no sign of his Marannele. The service started, her voice was not amongst the singers, he would have known it among a thousand. What was the good of all the admiring glances that were thrown at him if she, she for whom he had come, was not present, she for whom he had worked so hard, and for whom he now stood there so erect, as firm as a statue? Then after he had sat listlessly through the sermon, what was that? The parson called the banns of Marianne Bomueller, his Marannele, and Georg Melzer, his rival Joergli. Aloys was the first out of the church; his knees trembling and his teeth chattering, he almost ran home. Throwing his helmet and sword on the floor, he hurried into the outhouse and buried himself in the hay, sobbing and crying like a little child.

At last his mother came to him there, wept with him, and soothed and comforted him as when he was a little boy. He now heard that Joergli had seduced Marannele and that it was high time they were married. He wept again, and following his mother tore his picture from the parlour wall and smashed it into a thousand pieces. Some hours later, when at last he had to some extent fought down his sorrow and eaten some dinner, he smartened up his uniform and went out. He passed Marannele's house with downcast eye and made his way to the Eagle, whistling the while, and finally entered the public rooms and the hall where the dancing had already begun. He looked round for Marannele and was glad she was not there; at that moment Joergli came up to him and held out his hand, saying, " How are you, comrade? " Aloys stared at him as if he would like to poison him with a look, and then deliberately turned his back on him without a word.

He took a seat at one of the tables, and ordering a bottle of the best he made merry with his friends, who all crowded round him. They drank to him and he to them, and the girls vied with one

another in showing him how pleased they were to have him amongst them again. Mechtilde, the daughter of his cousin, sat next to him, and smiling at her almost happily, he asked her, " Wouldn't you care to dance? " " Certainly I would," she cried. " Come along, then," he replied, and they sailed away.

Aloys kept his eyes on Joergli all the time. He heard some one ask him, " Where is Marannele to-day? " and he also took note of the coachman's reply, " Oh, she's not very well! " a reply accompanied by a leer and a coarse laugh. Aloys could hardly restrain himself: he longed to get at the foul fellow's throat and to squeeze the insolence out of him.

As time went on the company's boisterousness increased, and it was well on midnight when Aloys prepared to leave. As he was passing out with some of his friends, Joergli and his clique began to jeer and boo; so they sat down again and struck up some jolly song and ordered some more wine. Then Joergli called across, " Shut up there, Clumsy! " adding some vulgar term of abuse.

Aloys got furious at this, and throwing a glass at his rival followed up this insult by jumping over the chairs and table between them and grabbing hold of Joergli. The music stopped, glasses rolled to the floor, and after a moment's breathless silence the whole company yelled and shouted. The enemies fought like madmen, Aloys pummelling the other man soundly with all the fury of an insulted and cheated lover. Then the friends of either party joined in the attack, until the whole room was one mass of fighting humanity. Only when the village policeman appeared and separated the two principal offenders was the affair stopped.

Next morning found Aloys on his way back to his garrison town, although his leave had still one day more to run. He was utterly dispirited and dejected, and knew he would be heavily punished on his arrival at the barracks; for his share in the brawl at the Eagle had been duly entered on his papers by the mayor. As he arrived at the cross-roads, one of which leads off towards Strassburg, he hesitated, and would have deserted and crossed the frontier had not a lonely wanderer just then joined him and accompanied him to Stuttgart. After he had served his six weeks' incarceration, he wished for nothing so much as that his time was up, and when he received a letter from his mother in which she told him that his cousin Mathes from America had sent twenty pounds and asked him to come out to him as soon as he had served his time, he was overjoyed.

In the autumn, then, he started on his voyage to the United States, and with him went Mechtilde, the daughter of the farmer up on the hill. As later on he wrote to his mother that Mechtilde was a good worker, but not like Marannele, there seems a likelihood that his old wound is now healed, and that he has found in the new land what was denied him at home.

HERMANN KURZ

1813–1873

MY GRANDFATHER'S WEDDING

I WAS thirty—my grandfather said—well into the thirties, and though the eldest among my already married brothers and sisters, still without a wife. The reason for this was my shyness; I could not look a girl in the face, and since I did not dance had few opportunities for so doing.

This upset my father very much, and he often told mother, " It is a crying shame; all his brothers and sisters are hitched up, and he, the heir, still roams the world."

But mother used to soothe him with words something like these: " Don't hustle him, father, everything comes to him who waits; he will yet find the girl who is waiting for him somewhere."

And this happened sure enough. One Sunday as I was strolling along the old town moat—alone as usual, for all my school friends were long since married and out with their wives—quietly enjoying the sunshine, a parrot of wonderful hue sitting in one of the lettuce beds in an allotment attracted my attention. I was sure I recognised him—yes, it was Miss Rieber's, the county doctor's daughter's bird.

Old Dr. Rieber was a very clever physician, but something of a crank; one could not help putting him down as such, for he would insist on the Prussian way of speaking, and this was quite out of place in a jovial south German. He had been through the Seven Years' War, and copied in all his mannerisms, and in the ordering of his household—this to the quiet amusement of his daughter—the famous King Frederick the Great, " Our Fritz," as he was commonly called by his armies. He did this in spite of the fact that he had no special liking for his old King, the result of a piece of rank bad luck at the battle of Zorndorf. There a cannon-ball had approached him sideways, and glancing off, wounded him in a way that made sitting and walking for some time, and riding for all time, impossible for our doctor. The army surgeon had replaced the loss by a piece of veal, but of course our friend had to be

invalided from the service, and that with only a small bonus. " I've no money for you foreigners " (Rieber hailed from Baden), said the King, who happened to be in a temper; " why didn't he dodge the shot? "

This the doctor could not forgive his hero for the rest of his days, and whenever any conversation veered round to the famous King, he let out:

" A famous tyrant, that's what he was, and he did me out of my well-earned pension just because I couldn't think of such a witty answer as that grenadier who, in reply to his query, ' In which alehouse did you get those scratches? ' told him, ' By *Kolin,* Sire, where Your Majesty paid the bill '—one of the few battles that ' Our Fritz ' lost! "

Of course the King could not have asked him that question, as his wound was not in his face.

Now this Dr. Rieber had a daughter Salome, whose figure was second to none of any girls in the town. People called her proud because she did not mix with them frequently; and though she did not speak " Prussian," like her dad, yet her speech sounded more elegant than that of other girls. Miss Rieber's parrot caused an enormous sensation, for it was a very rare bird to be seen in such an old-world place as ours. It was a present from a seafaring cousin, who, instead of the promised boxes of gold and treasure, had brought her the parrot; luck had not been with him, and he had not liked to come back quite empty-handed. She was delighted with the bird, and spent hours and days in teaching him to talk. Soon the parrot had acquired quite a vocabulary, and also picked up some Latin words from the doctor. Salome generally sat at the window with the cage on the sill, and every passer-by stopped to listen to the wonderful bird's chatter. So did I. No girl could have been annoyed at this, though Salome might have thought that I gazed at her. I often saw her smile roguishly as I stood there, or when I passed by, and gradually thoughts came to me, thoughts on which I used to dwell very pleasantly.

Therefore as I spied the parrot in the lettuce I said to myself, " How unhappy she will be over the loss of her bird. I must catch it, even at the expense of some beds of lettuce! "

" Salome! " shrieked the bird. " Where in thunder are you? "

I stalked him carefully; he spat and croaked, " Manum de tabula! " But to no purpose did he use the doctor's favourite expletive. I got him, though he also got me a deep gash into my thumb, and while he shrieked and scolded loudly all the way, I delivered him safely into his owner's hands. Salome, intensely pleased, called to her father. He thanked me, and told me I was a brave fellow to tackle this little brute, who might have hacked me about pretty badly.

Then Salome, seeing my handkerchief round my hand, cried out:

"O papa! he is hurt!"

"Let me see," commanded the doctor. "You silly fellow, why try to hide it?"

I begged him not to bother, but he inisisted, and as he was getting cross I let him have his way.

"Pretty badly damaged! This must be seen to at once. 'Manum de tabula.' Get away, Salome, what do you know about a wound? Get me my wound balsam, you know the glass. Salome!" he cried as she did not return immediately. "Where in thunder are you?" At last she brought the ointment. "The deuce! girl, you have been crying? Why?"

She hesitated.

"Your eyes are red; what has happened? What are you blubbering about?"

"Because the parrot has——" she stopped.

"Yes, has—has what?"

"Has——" she looked at me.

"'Has hacked his hand about,' do you mean?" added the doctor.

"Yes," she sobbed, and again her tears started.

"Silly girl," growled the doctor, "hand me the ointment again; that'll do more good than all your tears. It won't hurt, my lad," he added, "only burn a little. There you are, Salome, now you may bandage his hand."

I felt quite strange as her little fingers touched my hand. When she had finished, the doctor said:

"Call in to-morrow, do you hear, so that I can look at the wound again and wash it out. Now then, Salome, are you not going to thank him?"

She thanked me sweetly and added, "You'll call in to-morrow, won't you?"

Now, all my brothers and sisters with their belongings assembled every Sunday evening for supper in our house. When I came in and they saw my bandaged hand I had to own up to everything, and did so with many blushes. Mother smilingly rested her hand on father's, and all the others laughed heartily and nicknamed me from that day "the Fowler."

The next day saw me again at the doctor's, so did the next, and the day after that, and every following day until my wound was completely healed. By that time we had become such friends that I was asked to continue my visits, which I had resolved not to give up in any case. Often the doctor was out, and then I had some happy times with Salome and the parrot, the latter forming the connecting link between us. She liked me to tease him, and I

would pretend to be hurt, when she would hold my hand and sympathise with me.

One day she played a joke on me. When I entered the room Salome was not to be seen, and the parrot was hopping about his cage, yelling, " Silly Hans! Silly Hans! "—something new she had taught him. I pretended to be annoyed, and went up to the cage and tapped the bird on its beak. Thereupon he shrieked, " Help! Help! Salome, where in thunder are you? " And at this from a big box in the corner of the room came the cry, " Silly Hans! " No sooner had I opened the lid of this box than I received two or three of the old doctor's powdered wigs full in my face, and Salome jumped out. At once, all covered with powder as I was, I gave chase, the parrot meanwhile screaming and shrieking. I had just caught her, when behind us I heard, " Manum de tabula! " But this time it was not the parrot, it was the doctor, who, having entered the house, had been attracted to our room by the noise.

" What in thunder does this mean? What sort of behaviour is this for a respectable young bachelor in a strange house? "

I felt like a pat of butter in the heat of the sun.

" Silly Hans! " called out the bird.

" Who taught the parrot that? " continued the doctor.

Salome dropped her head.

" Ah, I thought as much. And you wanted to take satisfaction, isn't that it, young man? "

" Yes," stammered I, " I wanted——"

" What you wanted you need not tell me, I can guess that. But tell me—do you love her? "

" To be sure! "

" Do you want to marry her? "

" If Salome has no objection! "

" Now, girl, what do you say to that? Will you have him? "

Salome was too bashful to speak.

" Listen; if you won't answer you won't get him. If you don't want him then say ' No.' "

Salome answered with a laugh, " Not at all; I wouldn't say ' No ' for anything in the world! "

" Well, then, take her," said Dr. Rieber, " hold her tight and well, she is my only child. Don't let her indulge in self-will; she requires discipline, but let it be tempered with love and gentleness."

I promised to take every care of her, and added, " Now I must run off to get my parents' consent."

" You have that, my boy," called out the doctor. " I have talked this over with them long ago; you don't suppose you would have been allowed to come here so freely otherwise? I'll just send for them now, to celebrate the engagement."

Four weeks to our wedding-day! I was in ecstasy. Yet those four weeks were to be a miserable time, had I but known it. As soon almost as we were engaged, Salome seemed to change entirely towards me. I could not do anything to please her, she found fault continually; my clothes, my walk, my coming, my going, in short everything in turn was adversely criticised. She was frightfully jealous. After every walk she would take me to task for having looked at this girl or that, and then she began to cry and scold, and alternately to forgive me.

I was often very much upset, but the old doctor advised me to let her be now, and to hold the reins very tightly once we were married. As his only child, he said, he had spoilt her, and she had known quite well that his continual storming and strong language were mere make-believe.

Shortly before our wedding-day we had a really serious quarrel. Salome insisted upon being married in a crinoline frock—for the crinoline was still worn at that time—a costume which I with equal persistence ridiculed. She seemed to think it suited her particular style, and when I played what I thought my trump card by saying, "You in a crinoline! Why, they are going out of fashion" (this was true enough), "and you, who are supposed to be a leader of fashion, must not be so backward," she blazed up. "Fancy you talking about fashions! What do you know about them, you silly Hans?"

Immediately the parrot chimed in with his infernal shrieks: "Silly Hans! Silly Hans!"

I threatened to kill that interfering bird, and while we were having a tussle for the possession of the cage one of us—I do not know to this day which it was—knocked it over, the door flew open, and before I could shut the window the parrot had flown out.

Imagine my consternation and her temper! She accused me of having engineered the whole thing. I alternately begged, scolded, and implored; all in vain—she would not believe me, and the final result was that she told me she would not become my wife until I had recovered her pet.

Miserable and sad I left her. She had been so nice and sweet to me that day until the quarrel arose, and now my joy was dashed to pieces!

I hunted everywhere for that parrot. One clue I followed up and found—the man who had captured the bird; but he had been scratched and bitten so badly, and had been so frightened by its almost human voice and epithets, that he got scared and let it go. I told Salome about this, and she seemed somewhat mollified, but still treated me with coldness. This spurred me on to further efforts, and soon I heard that the parrot had been caught in a neighbouring village.

On my way there I met a peasant girl, who, in reply to my question, told me that she was from that very village. Eagerly I asked her if she had heard anything of my friend, the parrot, and was delighted when she told me she had.

" I will reward you well," I told her, " if you will help me to get him back."

" That will be rather difficult! " was her reply.

" Why difficult? Hasn't he been caught, then? "

" Oh, he has been caught right enough, caught and buried."

" Good gracious! " I cried, " and how did that happen? "

" Well, some few days back a boy captured a strange and savage bird that pecked him horribly; he took it to my cousin the schoolmaster, but even he did not know what kind of animal it was, and could only suggest that it must have been painted those colours. Soon the whole village had gathered to see the strange bird, and as we wanted to know what colour it really was, we first washed it in cold water, and when this did not remove the stains we soaked it in hot water, and washed it with soap and soda afterwards once more in cold water. This still did not remove the paint, nor seemingly do the bird any good, as afterwards it would not even eat; and it died the same day."

I was dumbfoundered, and yet could have shrieked with laughter.

" You are stupid people, upon my soul," I told her, " and particularly your schoolmaster. Fancy steaming a parrot! This beats everything. That was a bird from the tropics and its colours were natural. It belonged to my bride and was very valuable." Again I burst into uproarious laughter, and the girl, who had been gazing at me open-mouthed, then went off annoyed, muttering uncomplimentary remarks.

I stood wondering, deep in thought, and just as I had decided what to do, between the trees in the opening of the little forest path I caught a glimpse of what looked to me like a white straw hat with a green ribbon. Salome was the proud possessor of just such a hat, so I hastened towards the clearing, calling her name. But I must have been mistaken, for I found nobody there.

I hurried back home, and called at the doctor's presently, telling Salome the result of my search. She seemed to look at me rather peculiarly, neither scolding nor praising, and was neither unfriendly nor sweet. However, I bore in mind the doctor's well-meant words, and resolved to let her be until we were married.

Our wedding-day came at last. I only saw my bride for a few moments, and was glad she looked so calm, though she had put on that crinoline. The doctor, noticing my glance, caught hold of me, saying:

" Never mind, Hans, let her have her way for the last time;

to-night you can make her take it off and hang it up never to be used again! "

The bells were ringing, and we started on our way to the church, walking silently side by side. Large crowds had turned out to see the procession, for the doctor, at least, was a popular public man. The minister stepped to the altar before us and the ceremony began. As he asked me if I would have this woman Salome Rieber for my wedded wife I called out with loud joyful voice, " Yes," and was wondering in my heart if she would also give her reply in a loud voice, or in the usual trembling low tones. But as the minister put the question to her I was astounded to hear a very loud and hearty " No."

I was speechless with astonishment, and meanwhile the clergyman asked her kindly and quietly what she meant by her most unusual and unseemly behaviour.

" I shall explain afterwards," replied Salome, who now looked pale and frightened. The ceremony was at an end, the company dispersed wonderingly, and I arrived home almost distracted with anger and shame. I had been unable to utter one word.

My parents were equally upset and deeply resented this insult. We were discussing the matter when Dr. Rieber, leaning on his crutch, entered unceremoniously, and began at once:

" Friends, I could not have faced you here if after what my daughter has just told me I did not consider it my duty to try and clear up this terrible affair. I am far from believing what she tells me; yet there must be something at the bottom of all this trouble, for she tells me she wilfully caused it to punish Hans for his infidelity. His honour no less than mine demands an inquiry."

I merely said, " Please proceed, my conscience is clear."

" She affirms," he then continued, " that you have an affair with a peasant girl whom you met in the woods a few days ago; that you have laughed and joked with her, and have made the parrot an excuse for your meetings with her! "

" Then it was she," I said, and told them all that had happened that day in the wood. As luck would have it, at that very moment there came a knock at the front door, and the same peasant girl appeared selling butter and eggs. She had no sooner seen me than she cried out, " You again! If I had known this was your house I would not have come within miles of it."

" What has he done to you, my girl? " Dr. Rieber at once said to her.

" He insulted me; called me a stupid goose, and laughed at me after I had answered his questions about that silly bird."

" Then he has not made love to you? "

" Made love to me! What next? I would soon have knocked that out of him. He was rude to me, very rude, and you are

getting rude too. If you don't want my eggs or butter why not say so? Why keep me here answering stupid questions? " and with that she slammed the door and was gone.

" This is satisfactory," cried the doctor, joyfully, shaking me by the hand. " Now you shall have your satisfaction. To-morrow there shall be another wedding ceremony, and you will just do to her as she did to you. No, no refusal, you simply must. There is no other alternative, or you shan't have her at all. I have insisted upon her making amends to you, and now she has had her way she is quite ready to marry you. I have seen the minister and after a great deal of trouble induced him, and he has promised to ask her first this time, so I take no refusal from you."

Here I interrupted him. " No! No! " I cried, " not for anything——" But the doctor would not let me finish, breaking out into a fresh exposition of the whole case and telling me my honour and my future happiness with his daughter were at stake, for how could I ever look my wife and children in the face with such an insult unavenged. Finally I consented to say " No " after she had said " Yes." My father also had joined in and thought some sort of satisfaction was due to us, and although my mother was with me and pitied Salome, we had to give in. My only hope was that the old people would find some other way to gratify their desire to punish my dear girl. However, that was not to be.

I went to the church at the appointed hour. Again a large crowd of people had collected and the church was packed. Dr. Rieber had seen to that, for he said the atonement must be as public as the outrage. My relatives accompanied me to church, and there Dr. Rieber gave the bride to me. She was as pale as death, her cheeks showed traces of much weeping, and she did not raise her eyes to mine. I seemed to see something else besides humiliation on her face, I seemed to feel a joyful pressure on my arm as we walked slowly down the aisle. The minister had no book before him, nor again did he read the marriage service, but simply and solemnly said:

" Two of our community have appeared here before me, to express before God and this Christian congregation their will and intention towards each other." He then approached closer to us, and asked Salome first if she would have me for her husband. I had to look at my bride stealthily; she spoke her " Yes " with humble submission, not too low, and not too loudly. It was then that a great wave of pity for her—for both of us—surged over me, and as the pastor spoke to me and asked me if I would have her for my wife, I spoke with a firm voice a trustful " Yes."

This " Yes " ran through the congregation like some electric current, for I felt rather than heard behind me a sudden stir, as of a breeze running through the trees. But I only had eyes then for

my wife. She looked thunderstruck, and would have fallen had I not quickly clasped her in my arms. I gazed anxiously into her eyes; however, she quickly opened them, and seeing no reproach, nothing but quiet happiness in them, I held her still and whispered, " Hold fast to me, Salome, I shall never again leave you."

The parson seemed astonished also, but quickly recovering himself he now gave us his blessing, adding, " Young friend, you have chosen the right path! "

Is it necessary to tell you the rest? My father found it difficult to make the best of the bad bargain as he put it, but with the help of my mother we soon got him to welcome Salome and make her feel at ease. My mother of course was delighted with the turn that I had given the whole affair, and the more so as, and these were her very words, " The wedding-cake and wedding-breakfast will not now be spoiled, and we can all do justice to the good things and rejoice over the happy ending."

The last one to be pacified was Dr. Rieber. He called me a coward, said I had played fast and loose with his honour and so forth, but finally he allowed himself to be appeased, and I am sure that in his innermost heart he was glad that his only child had been let off so handsomely, and that he esteemed me more for disobeying him.

Salome afterwards confessed to me that she could have bitten off her tongue after her " No," but she had felt as if in a fever; and anyhow, she repaid me my " Yes " with the most unselfish love and devotion during all her life.

THEODOR W. STORM

1817–1888

IN THE GREAT HALL

THERE had been a christening in the afternoon; now it was near dusk. The parents of the infant sat with their guests in the great hall, among them the grandmother of the man. The others, too, were near relatives, young and old; but the grandmother was older by a whole generation than the oldest of these. After her the child had been named Barbara; but it had been given another, prettier name, for Barbara alone sounded so very old-fashioned for the sweet little babe. Yet this was to be the name by which it should be called. Both parents would have it so, however much their friends might object. But the old grandmother never heard a syllable that the worth of her old-proven name had been called in question.

Soon after the performance of his office the clergyman had left the family party to itself. Now old, dear, oft-told tales were brought to light, and, not for the last time, told again. Each knew the other; the old had seen the young grow up, the oldest seen the old grow grey. All told the merriest, the most charming tales of childhood; if no one else knew them, grandmother took her turn. Of her alone no one could tell a tale; the days of her childhood lay beyond the birth of all the others; to have known it one must have exceeded all human age. Amid this talk it had become evening. The hall faced towards the west; a glowing light fell through the windows upon the plaster roses on the white stuccoed walls; then this faded too. It had grown still, and from afar there sounded a hollow monotonous murmur. Some of the guests listened.

"That is the sea," said the young wife.

"Yes," said the grandmother, "I have often heard it; it has long been so."

Again no one spoke. Without, before the windows, in the narrow paved yard there stood a great lime-tree, and there the sparrows could be heard going to rest under the leaves. The host had taken the hand of his wife, who sat by his side in silence, and fixed his gaze upon the bossy old-fashioned plaster ceiling.

"What is it?" asked the grandmother.

" The ceiling is cracked," said he; " the cornice, too, has sunk. The hall grows old, grandmother; we must rebuild it."

" Nay, the hall is not so old," she made reply, " I mind me well when it was built."

" Built? What was here before? "

" Before? " the grandmother repeated. Then she fell silent for a while and sat there a lifeless image; her eyes gazed beyond into the time that was past, her thoughts dwelt among the shadows of things long vanished. At last she spoke: " It is eighty years now; your grandfather and I, many a time have we recounted the story —in those days the hall-door led not into a chamber, but out of the house into a little pleasure-garden. But this is not the door; the old door had panes of glass; through them one could see into the garden as soon as one entered at the street-door. A flight of three steps with a gaily coloured Chinese hand-rail on either side led down into the garden. Between two borders with low box-edging lay a broad white shell-strewn path to a lime-tree arbour, and before this, slung between two cherry-trees, was a swing. On either side of the arbour against the high garden wall stood carefully tended apricot-trees. At noontide of a summer's day your great-grandfather could be seen punctually walking up and down this path tidying the auriculas and Dutch tulips in the borders or tying them with bass to little white sticks. A severe, precise man he was, of military bearing, and his black eyebrows, with his white powdered wig, gave him a very distinguished appearance.

" Now it befell one fine August afternoon that your grandfather descended the little garden stairs; but at that time he was far from being a grandfather. My old eyes can still see him approaching your great-grandfather with a light step. From a neatly embroidered pocket-book he drew a letter which he presented with a graceful bow. He was a refined young man, with gentle engaging eyes, and his black bob-wig contrasted pleasantly with his bright complexion and pearly-grey cloth coat. Having read the letter your great-grandfather nodded and shook your grandfather by the hand. He must have liked him; it was not often he did that. Then he was called into the house and your grandfather walked down the garden.

" On the swing before the arbour there sat a young maiden of eight; she had a picture-book upon her lap wherein she read busily; bright golden curls hung down over her hot little face, gleaming in the scorching sunshine. ' What is your name? ' the young man demanded.

" Tossing back her hair, she replied: ' Barbara.'

" ' Have a care, Barbara, your curls will melt in the sun.'

" Swiftly she passed her hand over her hot hair; the young man smiled—it was a very gentle smile. ' Never fear,' he said, ' come, let us swing.'

" Down she jumped. ' Wait, I must first see that my book is safe.' She placed it in the arbour. When she returned he offered to lift her up. ' No,' she said, ' I can get up alone.' Then, standing upon the swing, she cried, ' Now, away! ' And your grandfather pulled till his wig danced about his shoulders, now to the right, now to the left of him; the swing, with the little maiden, rose and fell in the glare of the sun, and her bright curls blew out gaily. But yet she could not mount high enough! Now the swing rushed into the linden branches, that the birds darted from the espaliers on either side, making the over-ripe apricots to roll upon the ground.

" ' What was that? ' said he, and held the swing.

" She laughed that he should have put such a question. ' That was the robin; he is not usually so timid.'

" He lifted her from the swing and together they went to the espaliers; the golden fruit lay among the shrubs. ' Your bird has treated you,' he said. Shaking her head she placed a lovely apricot into his hand. ' For you,' she murmured very softly.

" And then your great-grandfather returned into the garden. ' Beware, beware,' he said, with a smile, ' you will never be rid of her.' Then he spoke about their affairs and they both entered the house.

" That evening little Barbara was permitted to sit at table. The kindly young man had begged for her. Not quite as she had wished it, did things fall out; for the guest sat by her father's side at the head of the table; but she was only a very little maiden and must sit at the other end by the youngest of the clerks. Therefore she quickly finished her meal and crept stealthily to her father's chair. But he talked so earnestly of accounts and discounts that the young man had never an eye for poor little Barbara. Yes, yes, that was eighty years ago; but the old grandmother minds her well, how little Barbara grew very impatient upon that evening and was none too well disposed towards her good parent. The clock struck ten and she had to say good-night. When she came to say it to your grandfather, he asked her: ' Shall we swing to-morrow? ' And then little Barbara was quite happy again. . . . ' What an old dandler you are, to be sure," said the great-grandfather; but he was himself really quite unreasonably in love with his little maiden. And the next day, towards evening, your grandfather left us again.

" Eight years passed by. Often in the winter time little Barbara would stand by the glass-door and breathe on the frozen panes; then she would peer through the peep-hole down into the snow-covered garden and dream of the beautiful summer, the gleaming leaves and the warm bright sun, of the robin that built in the espaliers, of ripe apricots that once upon a time did roll on the ground; then of a summer's day, and, at last, of none but this one

summer's day whenever her thoughts dwelt on summer. Thus the years passed. Little Barbara was twice as old and was really no little Barbara at all; but that one day of summer stood out radiant in her memory. Then one fine day he actually returned."

"Who? The summer's day?" and her grandson smiled.

"Yes, yes," she said, "your grandfather. It was a proper summer's day." "And then?" he asked again.

"And then," said the grandmother, "then there was a wedding, and little Barbara became your grandmother, just as she is, sitting among you now and telling the old tales. But it had not come to that yet. First there was a wedding, and for that wedding it was that your great-grandfather built this hall. Well, there was an end to the garden and the flowers; but that mattered little, for there soon came living flowers to cheer his noon-day rest. As soon as the hall was built, the wedding took place. It was a merry wedding, and many a day did the guests speak of it. None of you were there, you who must be in everything nowadays; but your fathers were there and your grandfathers, your mothers and grandmothers, all people who might well speak for themselves. They were quiet and modest times then, to be sure. We did not pretend to know everything better than our rulers and their ministers; and if any one thrust his nose into politics, we called him a tinker, and if he was a cobbler we went to his neighbour for our boots. The maids were plain Sarah and Jane; and we were dressed according to our station. And to-day you even wear moustachios like squires and cavaliers. What would you? Do you all want to rule?"

"Of course," said the grandson.

"And what of the people of rank, and the nobles, that are born to it? What shall become of them?"

"Oh . . . nobles . . ." said the young mother, looking up at her husband with proud, loving eyes. He only said, with a smile, "Wipe them out, grandmother; or let us all be noblemen, all Germany, every man Jack of us. I see nothing else for it."

The old dame made no reply to this; she merely said: "There was no talk of State affairs at my wedding; the entertainment pursued its even course, and we were just as merry as you with your new-fangled parties. At table a jesting riddle, a doggerel rhyme, and when they served the sweets we sang all the pretty songs that have long been forgotten; and your grandfather's clear tenor voice could be heard above them all. Ah, folk were more polite to one another; shouting and arguing were not held to be seemly in elegant company. It is all changed now; but your grandfather was a gentle, peaceable man. It is a long while since he left us; he has preceded me far; it is about time that I should follow."

The grandmother was silent for a moment, and nobody spoke.

But she could feel them grasp her hands; they all wanted to keep her with them. A peaceful smile lit up the dear old face; and gazing on her grandson she said: "His body lay here too, in this hall; and you were but a six-year-old, and you stood by the coffin to weep. Your father was a hard, ruthless man. 'Don't howl, lad,' he said, and took you on his arm. 'See here, that's what an honest man looks like when he is dead.' And brushed a secret tear from his eye. He had always held your grandfather in great reverence. They have all passed over now; and to-day I have held my great-granddaughter at the font in this hall, and you have given her the name of your old grandmother. May the good God let her come to my years just as happily and contentedly!" The young mother sank on her knees before the grandmother and kissed her delicate hands.

The grandson said: "Grandmother, we will pull down the old hall altogether and plant a new pleasure-garden; little Barbara is come back again. The women all say that she is the image of you; she shall sit again in the swing and the sun shall shine once more on the golden childish curls; and then, perhaps, one summer afternoon grandfather will come down the little Chinese stairs; perhaps——"

"Go to," said the grandmother, with a smile; "you are a dreamer," she said, "and so was your grandfather."

THEODOR FONTANE

1819–1898

WHITHER?

"YES, my dear Leontine, you must decide now, decide whither we are to go! I don't want to have to do it always; I don't want to ponder over the divisions of the earth in so far as they concern baths and spas, and then to find the unexpected heaven in an attic!"

"'Whenever you come, your place will be ready for you.'"

"That may be good enough for the poets, but not for us. Do you remember Kissingen, and our first night in that hencoop? With everything so dear and always trusting to luck! I've had enough; so I ask you, Leontine, whither?"

"My dear James, I wish you would not worry me with that eternal word 'whither'! It makes me quite nervous to hear it. We are only at the end of May, and have at least six weeks before us to consider it. Besides, what do you mean by 'hencoop,' 'heaven,' and 'attic'? Mere words. What you describe in that way was only a temporary shelter for a day, but we got a nice room afterwards. There is no need to hurry; no one remains for ever without decent lodgings, especially such a generous person as you are."

"No compliments, Leontine; make suggestions."

"What do you say to Misdroi?"

"Do you know Misdroi?"

"No. If I did . . ."

"You would be sure at least not to commence your suggestions with it. Let me enlighten you about Misdroi. It contains more Berliners than Berlin, and, moreover, a thing you would object to still further, more invalids than Berlin, besides Russians and negroes. And above all, Leontine, my principal reason for going to a spa is to get away from the dear old faces."

"In which I quite agree with you," laughed Leontine; "so let us drop Misdroi and consider Norderney."

"Good; it is worth consideration, but, on the other hand, you must remember that it is not much more accessible than Heligoland. You board ship at Emden, and then four hours of sea, and the four hours generally mean six. The ship will heave, the sea will be rough, and you will be sea-sick."

" I shall not be sea-sick. At any rate I shall always be presentable. I assure you, James, will goes a long way in these matters. Besides, it is a matter of good breeding. The sea would not frighten me if I wanted to go, for, frankly, Norderney has pleasant memories for me. I have been married long enough and happily enough, but still, I should like to refresh such poetic memories."

" Leontine, please! "

" Yes, James, poetic memories, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that I was still almost a child at the time, not much older than our Lulu. Do you remember how we played skittles every afternoon? "

" We did the same at Wilmersdorf and Holensee. . . ."

" Not at all, for, firstly, we played among the dunes in the wrack and thistle. . . ."

" It was very nice! "

" And, secondly, ours was no ordinary Berlin skittle-alley, with a board and groove from which you get splinters if you are not careful. At Norderney the ball hung from a curious old Frisian ship's hawser, and was thrown among the skittles in the same way that at home we used to throw the brass ring attached to a green cord on to a peg stuck into a pear-tree. But it has to be done skilfully. I remember how Alfred Meyer—an active youth then, barely seventeen, with the down just beginning to show on his cheeks—knocked down all nine skittles three times in succession."

" Quite possibly, Leontine. Most probably, in fact. But later, to be sure, he went bankrupt and escaped to America, and being such a marvel at skittles as you say, he might have set up a public-house out there. At Niagara perhaps, near the great falls."

" Now, James, you know I don't like such jibes, especially against people who were dear to me in my youth. I don't pretend to get my own way—one learns to do without that—but you asked me to make suggestions, and that led to what I was saying. But really, what have you against Norderney? "

" Nothing. Let it be Norderney, if you like. It's not quite a savage island; the wild tribes in the shape of native as well as immigrant hotel-keepers, as far as I remember, are keener on money than blood. So why not, Leontine? But though your description of the skittles was so vivid, I should find it too little to occupy the whole five weeks with, especially as I am fully convinced that I shall never be able to overthrow all nine of them three times in succession."

" No," she said, with that perculiar sarcasm which women know how to use so much better than men; " no, James; you will never be able to do that! "

And in her sudden burst of good humour she was about to

extract a new arrow from her quiver and complete her triumph with another excellent shot, when a servant entered and announced Herr Markaner, King's Counsel.

James rose to meet the visitor, who gave him a slight greeting, while he approached the beautiful hostess and kissed her hand.

"Business?" queried James.

"No."

"Good; then we'll lunch together. My wife has just been raving about Norderney. I have nothing against it, though, I must confess, I have nothing to say for it. I must tell you, however, that memories of youth have been invoked, which always indicates a weak position, and makes the thing doubtful. You, Markaner, know all the spas of Western Europe, and others too. You shall decide for us. Maybe you will raise my consent (given merely in the interests of peace) to a higher level. It all depends on you. What is to be the decision? Do you remember this island, rich in memories of youth?"

While speaking, James pushed the two decanters across the table to his guest.

"Port or sherry, Markaner? Or perhaps you would prefer some Rhenish wine, or Steinwine, or perhaps some old German? We have only to look at ourselves in the glass in order to recognise our special privilege."

Both laughed, but Leontine, who was very sensitive on the point, and was at bottom rather anti-Semite, went to the open piano and began toying with the keys.

"Well, what about Norderney?" James insisted, pouring out some wine for Markaner. "Do you know the place?"

"I've been there three times. In '64, when it was still Hanoverian, in '80 and in '81."

"Now bear in mind, my friend," said Leontine, walking over from the piano to the table, "that I can correct you if you make mistakes; so proceed, please, without prejudice."

"Why, of course, dear friend! But shall I be pardoned if I speak the truth?"

"The truth by all means. Truth is almost a passion with me; the passion of my maturer years."

"Of which you must not speak in connection with that comforting word."

James laughed, and Markaner continued:

"Now, to return to Norderney. We will begin with the soil. We find the dune-sand, together with a recent stercoral deposit, in all three states, or to speak more plainly, guano. Norderney ought to be converted into a fruit-garden at all costs. It would be a valuable enterprise from the agricultural point of view, but very questionable as a means of purifying the air. One hears a lot

about pure air out there, but from my own personal experience their so-called pure air, the breeze descending from heaven and playing over the island, is in no way connected with the relatively modern aristocracy of ozone, but rather to the—by all accounts—effete family of sulphuretted hydrogen. I think this last remark can pass without contradiction, since, if I am not mistaken, hell is older than heaven."

"We won't go into that. It is too difficult a question even for you, Markaner."

"And, perhaps," the lawyer continued, "there is an unconscious connection between these penetrating hygienic breezes of Norderney and the huge hotel on the seashore that bears the startling name of 'The Dram Shop.' There is also a music salon of which *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* form the entire repertoire. There are two flower-beds containing mignonette and wallflowers, and add to that the excitement of a seal being found either dead or alive about every third day, and you have the whole of Norderney as it is. There are steamers, too, that go to Borkum, Juist, and Spiekeroog; pleasure-steamers, supposed to be, and may appear to be such at a casual glance, but obeying the old law of choosing the lesser of two evils, I would counsel any one who is keen on his pleasure to remain on Norderney Beach. And then the eternal sea! It must be rather boring to be surrounded by it all the time. Personally, I prefer hills; the Alps; if not Rigi, then the Brocken, and if not the Brocken, then at least the Oybin."

"The Oybin? In Zittau, isn't it?" Leontine put in.

"Yes; do you know it?"

"No, but Lulu does. She stayed last autumn with her Aunt Sarah in Zittau, for ten days only, because the Michaelmas holidays would not allow of more, but when she came back she talked of nothing but the Oybin. And so you know it too?"

"To speak truthfully, I don't, in spite of the modern craze to know everything. I merely mentioned it as an example."

"We had better call in Lulu," James broke in. "I remember we wouldn't listen to her at the time, but then, who will suffer the description of scenery and landscapes? She will triumph over us now."

And walking over to the telephone he called up to the nursery for Lulu to come down, and soon she was heard singing and warbling as she walked down the iron staircase leading into the room, and a moment later appeared through the curtained door. She was a girl of thirteen, with a thick auburn plait. She shook hands with the lawyer, and went up to her father, whom she saw for the first time that day.

"Good-morning, father. Fräulein Oberlein is still upstairs, but she is so dull that I was glad when you called me." With these

words she seated herself on the arm of her father's chair and began tugging at his moustache.

" Now, don't do that, Lulu! Don't destroy the only sound thing I have left. Each hair is sacred to me. I know you can't appreciate that with your thick plait! I bade you come, not to destroy, but to create. We are sitting in solemn council and you must give the decision."

" I know what it's about! "

" What? "

" I know what I have to decide! "

" Well, what is it? "

" Whether we are going to the Cingalese Show."

All three laughed, but Lulu was unperturbed, her gaze fixed on a basket of red cherries that stood among the dishes on the table. She walked over to them and began to eat them, dropping the stones unceremoniously into her hand.

The lawyer screwed up his little beady eyes and said, with a kind of gravity:

" The Cingalese, the Zoological Gardens, that is to say? Hm! I wonder if there is some higher wisdom lurking in this child's words? I almost believe there is, though it may be difficult to explain. The child has hit the nail on the head. Oybin! pooh! Oybin is too far! The memorable word ' Cingalese ' our Lulu has so unwittingly uttered contains not only the whole truth, even though it be hidden, but coincides with the intuitive knowledge of my dead friend Meddelhammer."

At this stage, the lawyer naturally wished to proceed to tell a story about this knowledge of Meddelhammer's, but James, who was a universal genius in a small way, and dabbled in every subject, from the turf to painting and lyrical poetry, and had a passion for etymology, and in particular for proper names, forgetting all his plans for the holiday, forgetting even Oybin and Lulu, suddenly interrupted the lawyer with an almost professional solemnity.

" Meddelhammer! What a curious name! Dutch, I suppose! "

" Quite possibly," the lawyer remarked, who, as one can imagine, would far rather have come to his story than to discuss anything so trivial as the derivation of Meddelhammer's name. But James was insistent.

" Very curious! Meddelhammer! Hammer, of course, means nothing, it is so commonly met with; but Meddelhammer! What is meddel? Is it the English ' middle,' or a corruption of the German ' mädel '? I must ask a German scholar. Middlehammer is more likely, but Mädelhammer is more amusing. What do you say to Mädelhammer? "

" Now, James, please don't begin your researches in the matter, and show some consideration for the rest of us. And Lulu is so

engrossed in eating cherries that she has not even heard a word."

"Not at all," said Lulu; "I've heard everything, and I hope father will never say anything worse! I've heard him say such heaps of things!"

"I can see," said James, with a grateful glance at his pet, "that it is useless to go on before your unscientific attitude. I will drop etymological research. Come, Markaner, tell us about Meddelhammer and his peculiar knowledge of travel. Will it bear hearing?"

"Oh yes! particularly when you hear who he was. He was, in fact, a schoolmaster, and though I dislike schoolmasters in general, because they go to extremes and are either dreary pedants or superficial cynics (the doings of one of them made me blush the other day), still, I liked Meddelhammer—at least, at the time. Why? you may ask. Because in a quite unpedantic way he had his lighter moments."

"How remarkable!"

"It was. And now listen. One day I went to the Museum to see some old statuary (I confess they are too contorted for my taste), and just as I had finished and had gone into the entrance hall for my umbrella, at the very moment when I was about to put a twenty-pfennig piece into the box (I never give more or less), I turned, to find Meddelhammer confronting me. But in such a guise! and in such circumstances! He was wearing a loud pepper-and-salt travelling suit, a Tyrolese hat, and had a field-glass by his side. A *Baedeker* was in his hand, and, last but not least, there was his wife in a remarkably fashionable Rembrandt hat. 'Heavens, Meddelhammer!' I exclaimed. 'What are you doing here? Won't you introduce me to your wife?' 'Delighted, I am sure.' 'In Berlin, in this July weather! It must be about 100° in the shade! I thought you were in Ostend. . . .'"

"Too high a flight financially, I should think," James broke in.

"Possibly, but Meddelhammer made no objection to my remark. Instead he took my arm (a thing he had not done for years, because, owing to our development, we had had to drift apart), and said, while his wife kept pace with us, 'Before I satisfy your curiosity, my dear friend, let us cross the Frederick's Bridge to a capital lunch house I know, where we have lunched for the last three days. That is the exact time we have been wandering about. It is certainly tiring, in spite of the thrills we get over each new discovery. We have done the old Museum, the new one remains for to-morrow, and then for the National Gallery. A pleasing prospect. We shall wind up with the collection of engravings. The "Dante" of Botticelli should be very fine. Do you remember, Markaner, how you and I used to read Dante together? It was when we were in the upper second at Joachimsthal, and your

great desire was to be a poet.' Yes, my dear friends, he said that in the hearing of the two Museum attendants, and I couldn't contradict him, for it was the truth."

Lulu burst out laughing. "Fancy Uncle Markaner a poet! Uncle Markaner a poet! how funny! "

"Do you hear that, my friend? For the second time observe the child's wisdom."

"Rudeness," the mother said reprovingly, and would have continued, but James intervened.

"No interruptions, Leontine. Markaner must finish his story. Well? "

"Well, we got safely to the restaurant, and seated ourselves in a corner, which, to my utter astonishment, Meddelhammer described as 'a cosy corner,' in a 'man of the world way.' He had already tried it, and, I must confess, it was cosy. It was in a deep niche near a large window and a mirror. We could see everything that was going on in the street through the curtains, though we ourselves were unseen."

"Listen, Markaner, I am beginning to be impressed by your Meddelhammer. Did you say he was a schoolmaster? "

"Just a schoolmaster. But let me finish; the best is yet to come. I was very hungry; I generally am when I work hard for an hour or so. I called the waiter and ordered soup, eggs, roast beef, and a half-bottle of Larosse, and then I noticed that my schoolmaster was giving his orders, as though I had said, 'My dear Meddelhammer, it is now your turn! ' Meddelhammer understood me perfectly, but he did not order anything more than two glasses of port wine and a couple of rolls and cheese, which took me doubly by surprise."

"Why? "

"I will permit myself a little digression on that point, provided that the child, who was so needlessly called in to give her opinions about Oybin, does not mind."

"Not in the least," said Lulu, putting down her large collection of cherry stones and wiping her hand on a serviette.

"Well, then, the reason I was so impressed by their order was, in the first place, its peculiarly English or cosmopolitan character; it showed a knowledge and experience of travelling. In the second place, I was impressed by its lightness. I can hardly think of a more appropriate example for a light lunch than 'a roll and cheese,' especially since, owing to the rise in the price of wheat, the rolls continue to diminish in size."

"Quite true. The poor bakers have nothing but trouble and worry."

Markaner continued:

"I could see at once that Meddelhammer read my soul like an

open book (schoolmasters always seem to get a deeper knowledge of men), for when my half-bottle of Larosse and their two glasses of wine arrived, he clinked glasses with me and without so much as a question on my part said, ' My wife and I, Markaner, have to be very circumspect and curb our appetites, though, for my part, I confess that three hours at a Museum with new things to see and references to make is no light matter, and I envy you your soup and roast beef. But we must face matters squarely, especially since I am a schoolmaster. We dine at five, and if we took a full lunch at half-past two, we could not do justice to our dinner.' "

" But five is rather late, isn't it? " interrupted James, who believed in putting schoolmasters into a different class of men from bankers.

" So it is," said Markaner, " and I told him so."

" What did he say? Most people are very sensitive on that point nowadays."

" Not Meddelhammer. He was too sensible for that. He merely laughed and said, " Five o'clock is late, certainly, and when we are at home, like good citizens, we always dine at two. I dislike innovations when they are not necessary.' On my part, of course, I was anxious to smooth things over and return to the original subject, but he repeated, ' When we are at home. . . . But now, we are not at home; we are travellers, sightseers, if you like, in Berlin. When the holidays commenced we began to consider whither we were going. After three days of deliberation, during which time we discussed no less than fifty places, we decided to remain here and get to know Berlin as though we were foreigners. Yes, real foreigners. For, actually, we folk born in Berlin only live here, and do not know our capital. To put an end to this unpatriotic state of affairs, and perhaps to set an example to others (as a schoolmaster should), we packed our trunks, and at ten o'clock that same evening, about the time when the Paris express arrives, we drove up to the Hôtel de Paris, and just like travellers—Russian or English, perhaps—we had our tea brought to our own room, and sat for an hour and a half looking out of the window. The sight was enthralling. Over the Linden Avenue—which not one of us really knows—the lights were twinkling from behind the balconies—everything seemed so romantic, just like a scene in Spain. This is our third day of it. It will take us two or three weeks to do it all.' Thus Meddelhammer spoke as we sat in our corner, until he recalled us to fresh activities by drawing out his watch. ' We ought to be at Krautzler's from three to four,' he said, ' for an ice or a glass of soda-water, and in that spirit of pedantry into which circumstances have forced us,' he added, with a laugh, ' we must make no exception to-day.' And to be sure, half an hour later, we were all seated at Krautzler's, each with an ice in front

of us. As good luck would have it, a flower-girl happened to come along, and I was able to present his wife (who, by the way, looked more like a duchess than a schoolmaster's wife) with a bunch of flowers. She accepted it prettily, and said she would wear the flowers at table. From Krautzler's we went to the Hôtel de Rome, and there we parted. And now, my dear Madame, what do you think of my schoolmaster and of his method of travelling? "

Leontine was silent, but James burst forth:

" I vote we erect a memorial to your schoolmaster, an obelisk, let us say, with an inscription above the figures round the plinth! "

" What figures? "

" Meddelhammer in front, of course, and above him Krautzler and Mühling! "

" Why? "

" It is necessary to emulate him, to follow his example. Lulu, fill Uncle Markaner's glass! Now for a toast! Long live Meddelhammer! "

" Meddelhammer and a summer in Berlin! "

THEODOR FONTANE

THE BARROWMAN OF GRIFFELSBRUNN

SUMMER had taken me to Norderney, not so much for the pleasure of bathing, as that of beholding the sea once more, and at the same time to seize the opportunity of meeting a couple of old friends, who regularly spent their holidays in that fairly attractive though not exactly beautiful North Sea island. Their regularity of visit had brought about the finding of a permanent lodging in a suitably sequestered inn quite by the sea. From our rooms we could easily have cast our goblets into the ocean like the King of Thule, but we preferred instead to sit and gossip about things old and new. One evening the suggestion was made that each of us should in turn tell a story to the best of our ability, the story to be taken from real life. This was a necessary condition. The last to contribute a tale was Oldermann, an architect.

" There is a story I could tell you," he began, " of a barrowman, and in order to give the story a name I shall call it ' The Barrowman of Griffelsbrunn.'

" Now Griffelsbrunn, which at one time was not altogether unknown as a health resort, developed towards the beginning of the century quite a reputation as a coffee-garden among the people of the neighbouring town of L——, and when the latter town began —as you know—to expand during the 'seventies, and to absorb all the neighbouring tourists' centres and villages, Griffelsbrunn was among the doomed. It had to go as a matter of course; all the pavilions, booths, maples—everything had to go to make room for a big hotel with a bazaar on the ground floor.

" My plans being approved of, I was entrusted with the work. As soon as the excavations were begun, I was convinced from the boggy nature of the soil that a firm foundation would be absolutely essential, so I gave the necessary instructions to the builder and his old foreman, both of whom, as natives of the place, showed promise of serving us faithfully.

" A long stretch of board was put across the excavation, and a couple of dozen labourers were taken on to shovel into barrows the necessary gravel and sand—whole mountains of it—and tip it into

the foundations from above. I inspected the work twice a day to see that all was going well, as I wanted, if possible, to get the building roofed in before the harvest. Everything went smoothly, without a hitch; all the men worked well, but the best of them all was a swarthy, rather handsome man of about five-and-thirty. Without holding himself aloof from the others, or any sort of nonsense, he seemed quite obviously to differ from the rest. He was bigger and stronger, had a well-kept beard and slightly reddened eyelids. He wore a tight-fitting jacket instead of a coat; a cap of military cut, and thick boots that must have belonged to and done service for a traveller in the Alps. All his garments were in a lamentable condition, and showed signs of having been patched and darned by his own hand, but the cut of them, as well as the man himself, were impressive. In every movement of his there was a certain ' chic,' to borrow a word from the world of fashion, it being especially noticeable in the way he handled the barrow. Grasping the handles tightly, he trundled the barrow along with its wheel exactly in the centre of the plank as though it were a trick at a circus. But the most triumphant moment of all was when, with a quick, dexterous jerk, he tipped the contents of the barrow down into the pit.

" He had been working thus for about a week and a half, when I took the occasion of speaking to the foreman in order to get some information about the man who stood out so conspicuously from his surroundings. The foreman, however, was unable to satisfy my curiosity, having seen him only for the first time when he applied for work some ten or twelve days before.

" ' And I took him on, for any fool can wheel a barrow. It is easy to see he is not one of us; you have only to look at his hands; they are sunburnt, it is true, but not the hands of a workman.'

" That was all I could learn. It was little enough, and did not lead me any further. One day my curiosity, or, I should say, my sympathy, urged me to approach the man and say to him, ' Would you care to come and see me at my house next Sunday? I am always in between nine and eleven.'

" And he came. His garments, in a woeful condition, were the same as he had worn every day; the same coat, the same boots, but everything was brushed and scrupulously clean. He gave me the impression of a man who had seen better days, of a man of education and breeding. He stopped by the door and said: ' At your service.' I asked him to come in, but he did not move, and stood waiting until I should address him again, which I did.

" ' I daresay you have guessed why I wanted to see you. I can see that you belong to a different class than the one you appear in just now; you were not marked out for barrow-wheeling at your birth. You come from a good stock, and have had a good educa-

tion. Some time or other you came to grief, through your own fault or not, who can say? but probably through your own fault. Cards, women, bills, perhaps dishonoured ones. It was too much for your people; their patience had reached a limit, and you had a family no more. And what happened . . . happened. . . .'

" He followed each of my sentences with a little nod, and when, on finishing, I asked, ' Am I right? ' he answered:

" ' Yes. There were nine of us—six went into the schools, and the rest into the army. My father could do no more.'

" ' Yes . . . I understand. I know enough, and have no desire to pry into your secrets. And now listen. I am not rich, but I have connections, and think I can help you if you want help.'

" He was silent, and I went on. ' I shall speak to the foreman, or better still, to the builder; he will give you some other work on the building, and I will see to your clothes. Where there's a will there's a way. You are big and strong (I hope morally too), and you can pull yourself out of the mire. It all depends on whether you have the strength to take my hand.' He stepped towards me, and I saw that his eyelids had reddened. Shortly and abruptly he thanked me, and I felt a tear on my hand. I was as moved as he was, and then, with repeated assurances on my side, we parted. That same day I spoke to the builder, who, as usual on a Sunday, was my guest. He agreed to everything, and promised to do his best, but thought it would be difficult to make any change until the end of the week. Thus it was agreed, and the same evening I set off on a little visit to Dresden, which kept me away three days. The first thing I did on my return was to inquire about my barrowman. But he was no longer there.

" ' But where is he, foreman? You know the man I mean! '

" ' I know. He never came back.'

" I grew anxious and set inquiries afoot, in which the authorities helped considerably. But in vain. No trace of him could be found.

" Where had he gone? To the new world . . . or further? "

HERMANN LINGG
1820–1905

NIKISA

For many long years after Christianity was officially established in the Eastern Roman Empire, the old Greek philosophy and mathematics and the pagan books of Homer still supplied the standard works in the schools for women, no less than for men.

True, of first importance was it to learn the creeds, and the interpretation of mystical chapters in the Bible, and to study the writings of the Fathers of the Church; yet even to this end the rhetoric and dialectics of the philosophers were of the greatest assistance.

In splendid palaces and mansions the daughters of the highest families spent their youth studying music and the arts. They rarely caught a glimpse of the great outer world, though spacious gardens surrounded by lofty walls adjoined their dwellings, and allowed them every relaxation and splendid scope for entertainments. The delicate skin for which the Byzantine women were famous is commonly ascribed to this mode of living, and their continuous study of philosophy and the fine arts must surely have intensified and made yet more attractive the natural fire of their wonderfully spiritual eyes.

Nikisa, the daughter of an important official at the Court, excelled as much in her beauty as in her culture and her knowledge. To the most learned questions she would find a quick reply; she spoke several foreign languages, could solve mathematical problems with ease, and was an adept in explaining the meaning of religious mysteries. She was her parents' pride, and they had no wish to give her hand in marriage to any of her many suitors, while she herself seemed equally loath to give her heart; so perfectly happy was Nikisa with her books, her music, and her drawings. One day there came a summons from the Imperial palace, an invitation to the noblest ladies in the capital to present at Court their marriageable daughters. For the Empress had decided that her son, the youthful Emperor, Theophilus, was now to choose a consort from the beauties of his land. As the arrangements for this competition had been made in utter secrecy the invitation caused much private speculation.

At the appointed hour the beauties of the capital, together with their mothers, assembled in the glorious Pearl Room, a spacious hall duly prepared for the function. The floor, walls, and ceiling gleamed with wonderful mosaics; gold, and precious stones, so set by skilful hands as to outshine their own magnificence, sent brilliant shafts of light in all directions, and made all the ladies, accustomed though they were to magnificent splendour in their own homes, open wide their eyes. Soon the Emperor appeared, an apple in his hand, the prize of beauty. He advanced, visibly astonished at the array of wondrously lovely women, each one of whom appeared to merit his reward. Yet quickly his eyes descended on Nikisa, and lit up joyously. Striding forward he thus addressed the sweet maidenly figure:

"Ah, if only the beauty of woman had not brought so much misery into the world already!" He spoke as if he could thus appease the Fates, for the choice so quickly made.

Nikisa, happiness stirring in her youthful heart, made reply:

"But through the devotion of one woman, all evil was redeemed!"

The young Emperor looked displeased at this unexpected answer; he thought it inappropriate, even impertinent, and, disliking theological references of any sort, he felt rebuffed.

"She babbles like the noisy starling," he told himself, and turned away to another maid, Feodora, the beautiful daughter of a dowager lady-in-waiting. A simple girlish blush was here the only answer to his question. Delighted, he handed her the apple with exquisite grace; then, taking her hand, he led her to his mother.

Nikisa, realising her mistake, yet felt deeply the affront put upon her. Pride and shame fought within her youthful bosom, but with head erect and smiling she returned the proud looks of her rival, the sneering laughter of the company. Arriving home, in the solitude of her chamber, she gave full rein to her great grief. She knew that in those moments in her Emperor's presence her heart went out to him, that her love was fully given to be but trampled on. The days went by and her restlessness only increased; she could find no more pleasure in her arts or in her talents; a great emptiness seized her, and in her sorrow she decided to take the veil. Her parents could not finally withhold their consent, and just to show the world a finer path had been chosen than the one she might have trodden, her entrance into the convent was made the occasion for great festivities and rejoicings. The Emperor heard of this with much displeasure.

The wedding of Feodora was not long delayed. Theophilus, her husband, returned to the Palace with his newly wedded wife and overwhelmed her with costly presents, and all the splendour that his Court could give. Festivities followed festivities, and Feodora

always accepted modestly the homage that was showered upon her. In public she would show her husband a dignified respect, while by his side she tenderly abandoned herself to his love. Thus weeks and months passed in undisturbed happiness. Feodora, without possessing the high culture of Nikisa, lacked nothing in diplomacy, and made herself well loved and popular by carefully considering all her actions.

Brought up in prosperity, but not in affluence, she found ways and means to profit by her good fortune, and at the same time saw that all her relatives had a good share of it. Through her influence, one of her cousins had been made a captain in the Imperial fleet that voyaged to the East in search of treasures for the Court.

This greedy man, encouraged by success, thought out a scheme whereby he might smuggle in, under the Imperial seal, big loads of merchandise; and so, avoiding the custom dues, sell them again with huge profit in the bazaars of Constantinople. To this end he craved his cousin's permission to bring her on his next voyage some presents as a slight return for favours shown to him. Innocently was this permission given. Another greedy kinsman, who by Feodora's efforts had been made Treasurer to the Emperor, shared in the enterprise by advancing all the necessary funds from the Imperial treasury. Favoured by wind and weather the venture succeeded so far that in a few weeks the galley was safely back in the shelter of the Golden Horn. Now on that same day the Emperor attended the church of the convent where Nikisa had retired. Here for the first time again he heard her name. One of the hymns, through its noble words, its sublime conception, and the sincerity of its pious melody, aroused his curiosity, and on inquiry he was told that Nikisa, the new sister, had composed it and others equally fine.

"What!" cried he in accents of displeasure, "is it not forbidden that poems by women are admitted into the hymnody of our holy church? This girl, this presumptuous fool, thus permitted to force herself into the company of saints and kings! Hear, then, the renewal of my Imperial decree that no such verses are to be sung in any church." And with these angry words he left. Nikisa in her lonely cell was told of this occurrence. She had found some measure of consolation in her devotion to the church, and, deeply wounded, now resolved to retire far away from the capital to some monastery up in the inaccessible mountains, or on the borders of the great desert.

The Emperor in angry mood had gone to pace the gardens near the shore. There his trading galley was pointed out to him in the offing, and he gladly welcomed the diversion of boarding her with all his suite. At once he was struck with the great bulk of goods

all bearing his Imperial seal, and asking what they were, and if all were his, was told that part were presents for his wife, the Empress. "Impossible," he cried. "Open them!" This was done, and certain articles were seen that could not possibly be presents for the Empress. Several of his suite encouraged his suspicions, and, pressed to explain, the Captain finally confessed his guilt, but shifted all the blame on Feodora.

"Has a Roman emperor or his wife been ever known to engage in trade?" he thundered. "Land the cargo and burn the lot! The Captain and his ship remain under arrest till further orders!"

On his return to the Palace the Empress was immediately examined, and, utterly cast down by the weight of her misfortune, was unable to utter one word in self-defence. Condemned out of hand to exile in a distant castle, the poor woman in her sorrow yet saved her kinsman from immediate death by her silence, and bore her cross in fortitude. One more evil overtook Theophilus. Enormous crowds had gathered on the quay to save some plunder from the burning stacks of merchandise, and through their carelessness the smouldering piles they dragged away set fire to some dwellings, which, bursting out in one huge conflagration, destroyed the oldest wing of the Imperial Palace.

Theophilus, raving wrathfully at this, cried out: "Oh! Nikisa, that miserable woman who has brought all this misfortune on my house through her silly answer; her evil spirit seems to haunt me; let her go forth to the farthest corner of my empire; cast her out!"

When Nikisa was handed this peremptory decree, tears flooded her sad eyes, and again her love for him who had scorned her welled up within her youthful bosom. But quickly she composed herself, and hurrying to the shore she boarded the galley lying there, the Emperor's trading boat; the Captain, seeing the Imperial parchment, was overjoyed at his good fortune, and immediately gave orders to set sail. Midnight saw him out upon the open sea.

As in the case of Feodora, small causes have often momentous effects. The guilt that really rested on her was minute and yet dishonouring. It could easily be forgiven, yet never forgotten. She had heard of her husband's grief at the fresh disaster, and that no man had yet been found in all his dominions to undertake the rebuilding of the burned wing. It was then she wrote and opened out her heart to him, telling faithfully of the little share she had in her kinsman's treachery, and praying him to take her back to his heart.

Theophilus, deeply touched by the eloquent appeal, went to her and found the little pathetic figure with her beautiful face more desirable than the day he first saw her. "In all truth I feel my

happiness has returned! " he called to her, and whispered his forgiveness.

" Consider me the culprit, but also know that I honestly repent! " she replied. " Oh, what terrible havoc my stupidity has wrought; would that I could give my life to have the beauty of your Palace restored." Passionately he pressed her to his heart, assuring her that no treasure on this earth could replace her life, and happily she begged him to use her every jewel, every gift, to find an artist to rebuild the wondrous wing.

Again he pressed her to his heart, and tenderly continued:

" There is no master in my empire who can restore that glorious monument of Eastern splendour; an exact duplicate of the great Caliph's palace, its plans and their execution are secrets of the wise men of the East, and as the Court of Bagdad is unfriendly to us, not one of them could be got to do us service."

" Then why not approach the Sultan personally? " exclaimed Feodora enthusiastically. " If he refuse, then punish him with war, and our arms shall be victorious against the infidels."

" A holy war against the infidels! " And Theophilus, young and brave, gave orders to despatch the messenger.

For some time all went well and the Imperial couple seemed more devoted to each other than ever before. However, in the heart of Theophilus there rankled continually that old sore. On every hand he seemed to stumble on some word which, although innocent, did not ring true. His ministers, his servants, even his hunchbacked spy and jester seemed to him to whisper things when unobserved, and he knew positively that the Greeks in the bazaars retailed that trading story of his wife's in a thousand different versions. Just then another incident upset Feodora's master, who was a sworn enemy of idolatry. Feodora in secret was still an idolater, and the dwarf, the Emperor's spy, circulated a tale to that effect about the Empress.

" Who has accused me? " she asked indignantly, and when the Emperor declared it was the dwarf, she replied ingeniously:

" Oh, the atrocious monster! Early this morning, impudent fellow that he is, he entered my room while I was dressing and molested me. I angrily ordered him away and hence his accusation! "

" Yet he swears he saw you before a picture! "

" What he saw was the picture of myself in the mirror, nothing else! "

" The picture of an angel," laughingly cried the Emperor, mollified, and promised dire punishment for the dwarf. Feodora, however, was much disturbed, for well she knew that this tale also would now spread in Court and capital.

Shortly after this the messenger returned from Bagdad bringing

an absolute refusal, and immediately the fullest preparations for war were made. The first army had left, and already the Emperor and all the nobles were about to follow with the Empress when there appeared a Greek from Asia Minor, who, so he said, had been a prisoner in the hands of the Turks for many years, had learned the secrets of the Moorish palace, and would undertake to draw the plans and to rebuild the ancient glories of the old gutted wing. Theophilus and his wife gladly welcomed this young Greek.

Feodora seemed particularly attracted by the young artist, and frequently received him, that she might have his plans shown and explained to her. Often she would listen to his stories of suffering and privation at the hands of the Turks, and her glorious eyes, tear-stained, would dwell upon the beautiful features of the stranger. Continually she made opportunities for having the Greek near her, until her affection for him gradually ripened into a love only intensified by the great deference and restraint the artist showed her. Then the news of a reverse to the Imperial arms reached the capital. The Greek was suspected of being a spy, and even brought before a tribunal, where, however, he was released on the direct intervention of the Empress. Nevertheless some slight suspicion still remained, and particularly in the mind of Theophilus, who marvelled at the vigorous defence made on the artist's behalf by the Empress.

One evening as she wandered aimlessly alone within the Palace gardens, she found herself quite suddenly before the gutted wing. A shiver shook her as she gazed upon the desolate walls, and sorrowfully thought of the cause of this destruction and the part she was accused of playing in it. She had never been able to forget the cruel treatment she had suffered at the hands of her husband, and her love for him had never stirred again since that time of her expulsion.

While thus lost in contemplation she saw a figure in the gloom; it was the stranger! He also stood in meditation near the ruins. It was plain he had seen her, and he quickly approached in a way which previously she had not observed in him. With a free, almost imperious bearing he offered her his escort. She felt embarrassed, strange, and unable to refuse his offer, the more so as the quickly gathering darkness oppressed her. He led her through the ruins and explained to her his plans and how there would arise again a building the like of which would not be found in any land. Her admiration for the stranger grew as he led her away by his flights of imagination.

"I envy you," she said, "your heavenly genius that can create marvels only to be compared with the wonders of nature."

"And rightly so," replied the Greek; "for our masterpieces are founded on the laws of nature, our art follows the teachings of the

stars and of the heavens, and enables us so to create the wonderful, the marvellous."

"And surely this is the reason," she responded, "why, in the contemplation of some great palace, we feel the harmony of the Almighty, just as the beauty of the human form excites our admiration and inspires us with love."

Their eyes met as she looked up, but as he bent his head to kiss her forehead a cry of terror rang from her lips; he held her fast or she would have slipped down the passage that yawned before them. A malicious laugh was heard, and now he saw the cause of all her terror. A hunchbacked figure stood before them in the gloom, pointing a shaking finger to a group of Cupid and Psyche that lay half covered with dust beside them.

"It is Denderim, the Emperor's dwarf; we are lost; I shall be guilty in my husband's eyes, guilty before the world. Oh, what can I say in my defence?"

"Have no fear," answered the artist, "your affection is blameless!"

"Oh," she continued, "but you are already under suspicion, and I, yes, I could not save you again!"

"Save me again? But how is that?"

"I spoke up for you the last time; I, who have now been seen in your arms! They are coming! Listen! They are hunting for us!"

A number of Palace troops could now be seen moving towards them; as if going in their direction, these two now descended the passage before them, and finally sprang into the centre of a huge creeping plant, which entirely covered an opening in the side of a grotto. This opening led into a maze of passages and finally brought them out upon the shores of the sea. The Greek alone knew of this way, which he had discovered while exploring the foundations.

"Here we are safe," the Greek assured her, "and as I was not unprepared for what has happened, we shall soon be able to escape on board a vessel which is kept in readiness for me. Follow me and fear not."

"How can I answer for this before God, and before my conscience?"

"Well," answered her deliverer, "did you not tell me that accident only had bound you to your husband, that he repaid your love by harshness? Accident and boyish caprice raised you to be Empress—your slight mistake was punished by callous severity—how can you hesitate? No justice, no reconciliation lies before you, if you stay—only death, inglorious death!"

"What you say is true, only too true! Know then, O stranger, that I love you, that I will flee with you!" He pressed her

tear-stained face to his breast, and so they set out on their voyage.

A few days later Theophilus, who had been absent on business of war, returned to his capital. The terrible news awaiting him there he met with stony indifference; no angry words escaped him, no orders were given to pursue the fugitives. Deeply he plunged into the affairs of his army, into the relentless prosecution of the war, and strove with superhuman might to avenge the defeat inflicted upon one of his generals by the enemy. He, who up till then had only taken a passive interest in the affairs of his empire, now discovered that within his realms lay latent powers which, with capable leadership, would overwhelm any foe. Inspired by his sovereign duties he now became really great. The war obsessed him. Weeks and months passed before finally the opposing main armies were ranged against each other. Then a messenger under a flag of truce brought a parchment from the Caliph offering the Emperor of the Romans peace, and as proof of his goodwill the immediate surrender of a prisoner, a traitor, the Greek, who had so shamefully betrayed his confidence. Theophilus was too astonished at the offer to refuse it, and burned with eagerness to take heavy vengeance on the treacherous artist.

A truce was proclaimed, and a troop of Mohammedan horsemen brought in the prisoner next morning. The Emperor had him brought into his presence immediately. In his rage, pale with wrath, he had already drawn his sword to run it through the traitor, when the figure before him throwing off its cloak revealed itself as that of a woman; quickly raising the veil, he saw confronting him a face of such calm and intent beauty that he was struck with awe and wonder—it was Nikisa!

"You, Nikisa?" came at last from his lips. "What means this? What do you want with me?"

"Your forgiveness."

Overwhelmed by her wonderful beauty, her sweetly caressing voice, Theophilus dropped his sword, and, forgetting all the past, said:

"Dear Nikisa, I have done you much injustice; I do not think it is my forgiveness you need!"

"Only this once," she answered, smiling; and bending her head to one side and covering her face with the veil, added, "Do you know me now?"

Utterly taken aback was the Emperor, for now he saw before him the features of the treacherous Greek. Astounded, hardly able to trust his eyes, so complete was the deception—"But explain," he cried, still incredulous.

Nikisa then told her story.

"After you, exalted master, had condemned my poor songs, my

sorrow drove me out of your dominions. Could you but know what misfortunes, what dangers and what sufferings I encountered, your pity would assuredly outweigh your condemnation. The ship had hardly left the Golden Horn when, to my horror, and that of my companions—nuns who wished to share my exile—the infamous character of the captain was apparent. He did not even hide his intentions—for we were absolutely in his power—to sell us into slavery to the Turks. The days of danger and distress, however, sharpened my wits and I planned to save myself from that terrible fate. By playing on that dissolute captain's religious superstition, by bribing him with rubies which I had managed to conceal in my bosom, but more still by his hope of further gain, if he could sell me as a youth of exceptional learning and position, I prevailed upon him to provide me with a boy's suit of clothes. After great hardship and privations we were finally landed in a small town in Syria, and there sold as slaves. Happily my master was a venerable old man of high position at the Mohammedan Court, who, finding that I spoke his language to perfection and could both draw and solve mathematical problems, employed me in his work as master of the Sultan's Palaces, and soon put me in charge of several important undertakings. I quickly gained renown and finally became one of the principal architects at the Caliph's court. It was then that I was able to lay at your feet, O Theophilus, a plan of that great piece of architecture of which the burnt wing of your Palace was a copy."

A mild smile here flitted over the Emperor's face, and Nikisa continued:

"I came, and neither you nor Feodora knew me. My strange costume, my hair, the change in my features, and in my figure, the results of my long stay in a different country and climate, would not let you connect this youth with the old Nikisa. Then—fate changed your consort's sisterly affection for me into a strange delirium of love; and, as if I was that which I seemed, her love went out to me. And who could condemn her? With this love she repaid a debt to me, for had not she in turn deprived me of your love?—not knowingly, true; yet see how I have suffered all this time; the desire to punish you, when the opportunity arose in yonder gardens of your Palace, overwhelmed me and I fell. No harm has come to Feodora by my side, she is still faithful, and still your wife; though she fled from your Imperial wrath she did not mean to leave you thus for ever. Therefore, O Theophilus, forgive—forgive her and me."

The scowl on the Emperor's face had gradually deepened.

"Where is she? that I may judge her! But you, Nikisa, go, for I have already given you my Imperial pardon!"

At this moment the curtains of the tent moved to one side and

Feodora entered. She took a few steps forward towards her husband, but, deathly pale and trembling, she stopped, her outstretched hands falling to her side. A wave of pity, then of love swept over Theophilus. His earnest gaze fell on the saintly, beautiful face of his wife, and pointing at Nikisa he spoke:

"Since I have pardoned the greater sinner—the seducer—I needs must now extend my clemency to the seduced!"

And reading in his eyes the confirmation of these generous words, Feodora, with a cry of gladness, threw herself into his arms, to be held in fond embrace.

W. HEINRICH VON RIEHL

1823–1897

WOOING THE GALLOWS

In the year 1594 the town-scribent of Nördlingen had an extraordinary visitor. A herculean lad of about twenty, unkempt and ragged, came to the court-room one morning, planted himself squarely before the scribent, and stared at him in silence.

Unto the gruffly put question, "What do you want?" he answered no less gruffly, "A rope!"

The town-scribent told him he had come to the wrong door, the rope-maker lived round the corner. But the fellow replied to the effect that he did not need the rope-maker, but the hangman; he wanted to be hanged. The town-scribent shivered, for he thought the stranger was crazy. He therefore called a vigorous servant before entering further into this extraordinary conversation.

The stranger now confessed himself to be a homeless tramp, called by his companions Jörg Muckenhuber, and his language being pieced together out of as many rags of dialect as his coat was of rags of cloth, there was no further certificate required to make it evident that he was at home everywhere and nowhere.

He then proceeded to relate briefly and coldly how several weeks ago he had murdered a travelling pedlar in the precincts of Nördlingen, and also between Augsburg and Kaufbeuern a foreign Jew. Both the Jew and the pedlar gave him no peace at night, so he wanted to be hanged, and as the last murder had been perpetrated on the ground of Nördlingen, so the senate of that town could not refuse to hang him on the Nördlingen gallows.

The town-scribent swore furiously, and said it wasn't every fool could have that for the asking, the town of Nördlingen had built its gallows for its own citizens and not for villainous vagrants; at the same time Muckenhuber was taken into custody, and the scribent presented the affair to the senate.

The senators put their heads together without coming to any definite conclusion as to whether the lad was a fool or a desperate villain. As it was customary, however, in those days to cast the insane into the same dungeon as thieves and murderers, Jörg Muckenhuber was put in safe keeping in the tower, and the business

was getting under way in a most correct manner, whatever further details might be brought to light.

The executioner, the parson, and the barber, who went in turn to visit the prisoner and sound him each in his own way, declared with one voice that the fellow was rough and uncared for, but that his mind was very clear, and that there was no gainsaying him in his confession.

Meanwhile the news was scattered through the town, and the good citizens had lively quarrels as to whether a person could be hanged upon the strength of his mere confession and urgent demand, even though there was further proof of the deed of which he accused himself; for nowhere was there to be found a trace of the travelling pedlar and the murder perpetrated on him.

And when Muckenhuber was taken out, well guarded and followed by a curious crowd, to show them the exact spot where he had murdered the pedlar and buried his corpse, he managed to confuse and puzzle his judges by fine-spun evasions and equivocations, but there was no actual evidence of the crime to be found. The prisoner, however, clung with tenacity to his previous declaration, that he had murdered the pedlar in the precincts of Nördlingen, and must therefore be hanged on the Nördlingen gallows.

Although German burghers of provincial towns were as well accustomed to highly spiced criminal dramas in those days as they were to their daily bread, the sensation about this unusual case grew from day to day; especially was the reply of the Augsburg and Kaufbeuern magistrates anxiously looked forward to, to whom the acts had been submitted with a neighbourly request to have inquiries made concerning the murder said to have been perpetrated between those two towns upon a foreign Jew. But here too there was not a vestige of a Jew or a murder to be found.

But in the scrupulous proceedings of the sixteenth century, confession of crime was considered a proof by far superior to any other, and so the judges refused to be satisfied, the more so as the prisoner continued to bring forth reasons to explain the absence of all testimony.

It was deemed best to fall back upon that most unrelenting test of truth, the rack. How often had people who objected to being criminals been tortured into a confession; why should it not be possible to reverse the method and torture a man, who had set his mind on being a criminal, into a confession of his innocence?

But in the torturing-chamber the senate of Nördlingen got out of the frying-pan into the fire. For when the thumb-screws were applied Jörg Muckenhuber persisted in piping his old song, and when the effect was heightened by forcing him into the Spanish boots, he proceeded at once to add to his original offence by confessing a list of robberies, each of which alone would have brought him to

the gallows. The inquisitor had also a ride upon the sharp-edged ass upon his programme, but fearing less the invincible Jörg should add two or three cases of arson into the bargain he did not press the point, and the triumphant rogue was conducted back into his dungeon, while the senate was writhing in an agony of impotent rage.

To the more sagacious it became more and more evident that Jörg Muckenhuber was making game of the town authorities, but at the same time a joke of such ghastly grimness was unprecedented. Then, too, no one could hit upon a possible motive why the churlish fellow should subject his neck to the rope and his limbs to the rack with an amount of courage and power of will that was worthy of a better cause. This seemed too much for the most vicious facetiousness. Moreover, not only the acknowledged crime but the whole person of this Muckenhuber seemed to have sprung up out of the ground overnight as it were. For his sudden appearance in Nördlingen was surrounded with as much mystery as his crime. There were some who confidentially affirmed that he was the devil, who was out for a lark and had chosen this method of twitting the whole of Nördlingen by the nose.

However, this did not help to solve the difficult question of what was to be done with the vagabond.

Public opinion in those days generally inclined to the assumption that where the case was doubtful it was better to hang three innocent men than let one guilty one get away. And, moreover, Jörg Muckenhuber was guilty any way you might look at it. For if he had committed the murder in question, then he deserved the gallows, and if he had not committed it, then he deserved the gallows more than ever, because by reason of his iniquity the senate of the town had made a confounded fool of itself. But as there was no unanimity in court in which of these two ways he had deserved the gallows, he was left for the present quietly in the dungeon.

It was not exactly attractive there. The cell was half above ground and half below, in a small tower, which upon three sides faced a swampy bog; there was no surplus of light, but a narrow little window let in a bit of chiaroscuro, which would have enabled one to distinguish a chair from a table on a sunny noon-day—that is, if there had been any such objects of luxury at hand. There was more pleasure to be derived from outside. Under the window the frogs sang in a varied and full chorus. At one side there was another dungeon, occupied by an old hag, who obstinately refused to confess to being a witch. Her so-called window also faced the bog, and when the two neighbours looked out of the window they could converse with facility, although it was without seeing each other, and no one excepting the frogs overheard their conferences.

Jörg had received the first intimation of his neighbour's presence

by hearing her pray aloud one day. It was no soft, humble prayer; it was passionate, almost as if the old woman were storming the Almighty with commands rather than petitions. Jörg had never learned to pray, and at first the devotions of the old woman struck him as very odd; gradually it came to look very grand to him that an old hag should venture to address herself to God with such vehemence, and he came to the conclusion she must be a giant in strength and able to hold her own against ten men.

He did not open the conversation, but waited until his neighbour should discover his proximity and address him. Even heroic women like to talk. Soon an intimacy sprang up between these two comrades in distress who had never seen each other. At first Jörg often interrupted his neighbour's kind words with many a scornful and dogged remark, but she always answered him so mildly, and at the same time with so much quiet superiority, that Jörg's insolence was soon tamed.

In the course of a few days Jörg knew the history of his neighbour by heart, but he obstinately kept silence about his own.

The old woman was the well-to-do, childless widow of an innkeeper. In her sixtieth year she had the misfortune to be accused of witchcraft. A wealthy witch is a rarity. But it so happened that during the last five years all ugly poor women had been burned up in Nördlingen, and as every witch was called upon to name accomplices, and as the zeal of the judges increased with each execution, at last it came to be the turn of young, handsome, and rich women as well. There were enough of these unfortunate women, but none was so unfortunate, and at the same time so heroic, as Maria Hollin. She had been on the rack fifty-eight times, and had confessed nothing. She was indeed, as Jörg had rightly judged from her prayer, able to hold her own against ten men. The judges were in despair; it was out of the question to acquit a person who had been tortured fifty-eight times, and it was equally so to condemn her without a confession.

Moreover, the rumour of her firmness had gone among the populace, and there was much sympathy with her, and a threatening murmur of displeasure against the much-feared judges. Up to now everything had gone smoothly and comfortably. Thirty-two women had been accused, put on the rack, convicted, and burned; not one of them had made any trouble. At the worst, the one or the other had to be left hanging with weights on her feet until the judges had had some refreshments. But when they came back from lunch the fullest confession had always rewarded them. And now, through the obstinacy of this woman, the smooth course of events had been most aggravatingly interrupted.

And then, too, there was that provoking affair with Muckenhuber.

The one would not confess her guilt, while they were hankering to condemn her; the other they would have been only too happy to let go, but even the rack was powerless to extract the confession of his innocence. The town-scribent thought if Jörg Muckenhuber were only a woman, then by a bold strategy he might be burned, as it were by mistake, instead of Maria Hollin, and she might be dismissed in his stead, so that each should have his heart's desire, and the court should preserve its authority.

But the worst of all for the senate was the prospect of a diplomatic storm that was brewing at the horizon in the direction of Regensburg. Maria Hollin had well-to-do relatives at Ulm, and the magistrate of that town, convinced of her innocence, had applied for her release. But that did her little good. The town-scribent thought it would endanger the reputation of a court to put a person on the rack for fifty-eight times and then not even to have the satisfaction of singeing her a little, not to speak of burning. But the burghers of Ulm would not be silenced. At Regensburg there was an important Reichstag that year, and the Emperor, Rudolph II., was present in person. The ambassador from Ulm received orders from his town to intercede for the accused, and as he was not given a hearing he threatened to set the Emperor and the Reich against the law-court of Nördlingen.

The history of Maria Hollin made a deep impression upon Jörg Muckenhuber. Until now he had looked upon himself as a hero before his judges, but by the side of this true heroine he appeared to himself to be playing the part of a bad boy. Out of stubbornness and pride he had kept silent about his true history before his judges; before this woman he kept silent for shame. But finally he could not resist the firm, sympathetic voice of his invisible companion.

So he was tame at last, and began to confess his tale to the old woman. At first he asked her if she had ever seen a pair of fighting dogs that had locked teeth, and so held each other as in a vice, for all the cuffs they got to make them let go. He and his judge, he said, were like such dogs. From a child he had led a bold vagabond life; he had enjoyed all the pleasures of a restless, adventurous rover, and had suffered all the deprivations and distress and shame of such. He had never murdered or robbed, only taken along what he needed. He was tired of the whole business. Life was a burden to him, but to take his own life, and be found later in the water or in the woods like a beast, was not to his taste.

He had often heard death on the gallows lauded as the best, and when his companions spoke of their " heroes," it was always of such persons as had reached the highest point of their career on the upper round of the ladder leading to the gallows.

To put a showy end to life, which had lost its attraction for him, Jörg went to Nördlingen, a town which was then notorious for its hasty justice.

Dame Hollin thereupon gave Jörg a most terrific lecture. To judge by the tone of her voice, he thought of her as standing in her dark cell like the angel with the flaming sword. For all that her sermon did not touch him specially. He was much more deeply contrite when in the silent night he compared her heroic courage and disdain of death with his own sorry tale, making his invincible obstinacy look like the caricature of her bravery. He admitted the justice of everything she said when with a firm hand she shook his conscience; but he did not admit the justice of what the others said. And when Dame Hollin condemned him it frightened him as much as damnation at the last judgment might; but before that day came he was determined to play his joke upon the senate of Nördlingen, and hang on their gallows.

Months passed. The two neighbours grew to be more and more to each other. The alleged witch succeeded in implanting a little bit of Christianity upon him, at least as much as could be crowded through the narrow-barred window. Jörg accepted her dogmas willingly enough, but would not let go of his own dogma, that he must be hanged on Nördlingen ground.

Jörg had locked teeth with the senate, but the senators had also locked teeth with each other because of this same Jörg.

Two parties formed and quarrelled so heartily that they quite forgot the object of their quarrel. One side, as before mentioned, wished to hang him because he had committed murder; the other, because he had not committed murder. Only the town-scribent constituted, in silence and all by himself, a third party of mediation. He wanted to let Jörg get away. For, he said to himself, if he had been put on the rack the first day, the truth would most likely have come to light; now it is too late. If we wait until both parties agree as to which offence Muckenhuber shall be hanged for, he may meanwhile die of old age in the tower. This would be a clear loss to the town, which supplies the vagabond with food and lodging all for nothing. The town-scribent further concluding with subtle psychological insight that Jörg would probably by this time be mellow and tired of the poor fare of prison, it seemed to him to be the best plan to leave the door open by accident, so that the fellow could run away.

So he gave orders to have the door of his cell left unbolted from time to time. Jörg noticed it, but did not stir; he was determined to be hanged on Nördlingen ground.

But when he told his neighbour of the growing carelessness of his gaoler, things took a new turn. With the knowledge of the open door, though it was not that of her cell, the mighty love of freedom

awoke in Dame Hollin. " If I could get out! " she cried, " it would not be to escape; I should but go to come back—go to tell my friends at Ulm of the disgrace I have suffered, and come back with witnesses and testimonials of my innocence. I do not want freedom; I want my honour and reputation——! " She did not finish what she wanted to say, but Jörg understood her.

For some time he had been at work breaking through the thin partition between the two cells. His only tool was a small piece of iron, and the work progressed but slowly. After these words of Dame Hollin he worked day and night with the utmost exertion of his strength, and in the third night he could manage to crawl through the small hole.

There was no time to be lost. This same night Jörg's door was left unbolted again, so there were a few hasty words of farewell spoken. Dame Hollin crept through into her neighbour's cell. Thus Jörg, trembling from head to foot, threw his arms about the old woman's knees, and, as if he wanted to throw the fulness of his obedience and gratitude into one word, he cried, " Mother! " and she passed her hands gently over his face, feeling his features in the darkness, and crying, " My poor, unhappy son! "

Dame Hollin hid in the house of a faithful friend, to escape to Ulm the next day. Jörg slipped over into the deserted cell, and when his gaoler came to the door in the morning to push in a dish of humble fare, he crouched down in a corner, wrapped in the cloak of the old woman, and when the man passed on to his cell, he slipped nimbly through the hole in the wall, and in the garb of Jörg Muckenhuber received his own ration. He kept this up for about a week with much skill and secret delight, if sorrow for the loss of his faithful comrade had not choked his pleasure.

But one day the door was opened wide enough to admit the town-scribent, together with the gaoler, the former ordering Dame Hollin to follow him to the court-room. Jörg played his rôle as long as he could, crouched down in terror in the darkest corners, and repelled his tormentors with silent gestures. But when the town-scribent cried reassuringly, " Woman, come boldly forth; I lead thee not to the rack, but to freedom," then Muckenhuber forgot his mask, threw his cloak from his shoulders in impotent rage, started up indignantly and cried, with his clenched hands in his side, " You will do no such thing; I want to be hanged, and I won't let you off! "

The town-scribent tore his hair in despair and rage when he perceived that the witch was gone and the vagabond was left. He had intended to conduct Dame Hollin to freedom, but it was to have been freedom under weighty conditions; and now she had disappeared without any conditions whatsoever. Jörg, however, who was to have disappeared and no questions asked, sat once more

firmly upon the neck of the senate. " Fellow, there's no putting an end to you! " cried the town-scribent, foaming at the mouth. But Muckenhuber replied coldly, " It is this I complain of, that you won't even try! "

The senators poured bitter reproaches upon each other, at first in a low tone, then louder, until the storm grew, and there was a wild confusion of voices. Then the town-scribent silenced them all with his deep bass, and united the disputants with a word. He cried, " The cause of all this trouble is only Jörg Muckenhuber. Hang him at once if he does not recant his old confessions! " Jörg replied, " I do *not* recant! " and when the town-scribent asked him for the second time, " Now, I certainly shan't recant," and the third time . . .

There stood old Dame Hollin as if she had grown out of the ground, conducted by two of the most respectable burghers of Nördlingen and Ulm. She looked sharply at Muckenhuber, and said in a firm tone, " Jörg, you will recant your false confession! " The voice struck the insolent fellow like a peal of thunder. He was silent and lowered his eyes. There was no sound, one could hear the laboured breathings; then he spoke: " No other power on earth could have made me recant, but I cannot lie in the face of this woman;—I recant! "

Meanwhile the tumult of the populace was increasing. The air was filled with wild threats, and with demands for the immediate release of Dame Hollin. The gentlemen saw that there was danger in delay. After a short, whispered debate the town-scribent read aloud the writ the old woman was to swear to. But Dame Hollin replied that she did not want mercy but demanded her right. The gentlemen of the senate made very wry faces and began to try persuasion, but they had learned ere this that there was little to be gained in that way with Dame Hollin.

After a moment's thought, she said to her judges, " You have tried to make a bargain with me. Having done so, you are no longer my judges, and cannot give me my right. Well, then, I too am ready to offer you a bargain. Release that wicked lad yonder, I will adopt him in child's stead, and take him to Ulm with me, and see if I can do better by him than you have done. My property has lain dead while you kept me in the tower. You should refund the usury I have lost; instead of that give me this wicked lad. On this condition will I sign your writ."

Already the populace clamoured outside the door. The senate would have had no choice, even though she had demanded much more than this.

As she signed the writ, she found a bill appended for her fare during the time of her custody. She returned the leaf with a courteous smile to the town-scribent, and as the rabble was knocking

at the door he plucked the interesting document into bits as fast as possible, and strewed the pieces under the table.

Meanwhile the chains had been removed from Jörg; he looked about him as in a dream. Dame Hollin took his hand, and went to the door with him, where both were received by the gratified shouts of the shuffling crowd.

. . . . . .

The old woman kept her word. In her house Jörg became an honest, valiant man, who in the Thirty Years' War did great service to Ulm, the town of his adoption, and his name was never spoken but in honour and gratitude. But the witch's counsel was forced to resign office, and after those five years of terror followed a better decade, during which law and justice reigned once more in the old Reichstadt.

BARONESS VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH

1830–1916

AN ORIGINAL

If the assertion be just that originals have ceased to exist, then all who have met Herr Gabriel Teufenberg may boast to have seen something that does not exist.

His appearance excites neither interest nor antipathy. His height is six feet,—breadth to match; he has the complexion of a rosy, well-fed child, and a large face with small features, a fine straight nose, a well-cut mouth under a thin, almost white moustache with the sheen of silk. His eyebrows and lashes, too, are almost white, his eyes round and blue and expressive of nothing.

Alas, how cold and mute the boy's eyes are, his mother would think whenever she looked at him, even colder than those of his poor dead father.

Her own were brown and warm, and her six-and-forty years notwithstanding she was still a charming and pretty woman. Her married life with a lumpish husband, not her equal in intellect, had brought her no happiness. Though flattered and courted on all sides, she had never been touched by scandal. Her indolent spouse had left the management of his estates and property in her hands and her son followed his example. He could not have done better. His mother reigned willingly and successfully and was, besides, a charming hostess in town and country. Her house was graced by three young orphaned nieces, any one of whom she would have welcomed as a daughter-in-law. But Gabriel paid no more heed to his cousins than to waxen dolls, that is to say, to the immovable variety, for the moving dolls would at once have excited his lively interest. Any mechanism,—engines, large and small,—were his hobby. As an infant he constructed pumps, mills, and dredgers of cardboard and tin, and they really worked if one pulled a string or turned a handle. Later in life he was less fortunate; the great agricultural machines which he furnished with all sorts of improvements would not work.

His life was placid enough. Early to bed and late to rise, he took a couple of hours to dress, ate much and slowly and without the least culinary understanding. Had he been asked whether he

preferred potatoes or Perigord-truffles, he would have replied: "It is all the same to me." His evenings in town in the winter he spent either in the theatre or playing whist in his club, and it was all the same to him what they played in the theatre or whether he won his rubber or lost. In the country he spent most of his time in the workshop which he had fitted up in the castle. The ladies called it "Vulcan's stithy." Thence he had to be fetched for every excursion into the country if his company was desired. And during the loveliest rides or walks, attended by three pretty jolly young girls, he dreamed of engines.

"Look here, Gabriel," his mother said to him one day, "you ought to marry one of your cousins."

"Gladly," he answered.

Then she was happy. "May I tell one of them?"

"Certainly."

"But which one?"

"It's all the same to me."

And there was an end to her joy.

One after another the pretty cousins married away, and soon after Teufenberg had acted as groomsman to the last he lost his mother.

She had been nursing the sick in the village during an epidemic, caught the disease herself, and died within a few days. Gabriel neither wept nor complained; there was not the least trace of sadness about him, but everybody sought to comfort him in his loneliness and to hearten him. Friends and relatives were naturally agreed that now he must marry, and when they pointed out to him that it was merely a question of choosing aright, he said: "Exactly." In the end he did not choose, but was chosen by a charming young widow, the picture of a woman, with black eyes, black hair; delicate and slender as he was strong-jointed and bulky. She did not fall in love with him, but she liked him, valued his tranquillity, his refined and dignified bearing, his moral soundness. She would have it that he was nothing like the indifferent phlegmatic that people took him for. A warmth of feeling lay dormant within him that only wanted rousing.

Her friends mocked her: "Will you do the rousing? We notice no change. He is the same as ever."

She was not to be put out. "You wait," she said, "it will come."

Cecilia Teufenberg was looking forward to the birth of her first child and longing for a son. "What do you wish for?" she asked her husband, "a son or a daughter?"

"It's all the same to me," he said, and she would not believe it, and urged: "You darling, that is just your delicacy, that I should not be grieved if I were to present you with a daughter."

But she bore him a son, and another the year after, and these children grew up splendid boys. They had the honest heart, the clear intellect, the beautiful eyes and features of their mother and the father's fine figure. They were ten and nine respectively when another happy event occurred in the house of Teufenberg. The head of the house had been away for some weeks on a visit to a friend in England, the owner of a large engineering works, who had invited him to see an improved Alliance engine in working. A telegram announcing the birth of a daughter and that mother and child were doing well was brought to him as he stood before the model of a travelling crane which excited his admiration. He could not tear himself away, and begged his host to wire his congratulations to his wife.

He stayed another month in England and then returned with a waggon-load of presents: bicycles, tandems, telephones, gramophones, typewriters, and sewing-machines, and a precious naphtha-launch. But his most valued acquisition was a transformer. This new and dangerous inmate was set up, well guarded and with every conceivable precaution, in the workshop, there, fed by an adjacent mill, to supply power to the whole of the machinery.

Gabriel had found everything at home in perfect order, his wife and the boys in flourishing health. He never inquired after the new arrival, his daughter, and Cecilia was determined to make no mention of the baby while the father ignored her. But the boys could not suffer to have their sister passed over in silence. After dinner they each took an arm and led their father in to the nursery. Frau Teufenberg followed. Entering the spacious, lofty, bright apartment, they were met at the door by a healthy nurse, and an even more goodly foster-mother. Within the shadows of a deep recess there was what appeared to be a rosy cloud floating over a frame-work of gold. On approaching, this cloud resolved itself into a dainty arrangement of chiffons and ribbons and lace, and buried in the midst of it was some tiny thing, a human miniature with a little round face, large blue eyes which had an amazingly firm and steady gaze, a delicate tiny nose, and slightly open mouth, the mouth of a cherub just ready to sing. And a pair of dainty hands were raised, and fought wildly and absurdly through the air.

Teufenberg regarded this little thing attentively. He could not have regarded the most complicated machine more attentively. Slowly and carefully he laid a finger in one of the little hands, which clutched him at once. And this moment wrought a transformation in Gabriel Teufenberg. His voice became soft as it had never sounded before, and he exclaimed: "A girl, just see, a girl."

"Your daughter Gabrielle," said his wife, amazed at the impression.

From the little fingers which still clung to the father there seemed to issue a current, some vivifying rousing force which flowed from the crown to the soles of the tall broad man. It was as if a flame had been lit within him and spread a genial warmth through all his veins. He stooped to kiss the face and the hands of the infant, and then he turned to his wife.

"I thank you," he said, "that you have given me so dear a daughter." His glance fell on his sons and dwelt on them a long while with joyous pride. Then he added: "and two such dear boys." He had a few kind words for the nurses too; then he turned to contemplate anew his daughter, who had now fallen asleep.

After this there were whole days when he never set foot in the workshop. The development of the little being by his side filled him with joy. All harshness in his nature was softened and vanished. His dull eyes were opened to the wealth of happiness which had so long been his without his knowledge.

He has always been a good and comfortable man, thought his wife, but now he actually grows attentive and tender, and she really feared that, after their twelve years of married life, she might fall in love with him. But another, more serious care beset her. It seemed as though all the happy change might be called in question by the creator himself. For at a time when other children show repugnance to anything like learning and serious study, this young person displayed an astonishing thirst of knowledge and spirit of inquiry. Especially in mechanics. She gave early proof of rare skill and, like her father, made little pumps and mills and things. They were, however, much daintier and neater, and they worked more accurately. She would hollow out the wooden beasts of her Ark and the family of Noah, and fill them with primitive clockworks and wheels and make them move automatically.

And her favourite resort was the workshop. In the woods, in the garden she would long for the workshop and the machinery; instead of dolls she would play with models of steam engines, pumps, and winches, which she learned to handle with remarkable cleverness. If some mechanism had broken down and her father tried in vain to discover the cause, she would detect it at once and never rest until she had devised a remedy. Her ingenious brain was crowded with ideas, some of which were actually approved by experts and put into practice.

Her father went about in the purple of pride for this wonder-child. Her mother was vexed with the successes of a talent so wholly unnatural in a young girl.

"My daughter—the engine-man," said the mother, when Gabrielle came from the workshop with horribly soiled hands, the pretty face all aglow with eagerness, streaked with soot, and her

frock stained all over with oil. "No more dresses for you, my dear: you shall have overalls and nothing else. And beware! If you drag father back into the clutches of the engine-demon, you shall see. . . ." And she cleaned her, and changed her frock, and hugged and kissed her, thinking: "Only to have you, you little fairy-godmother, that hast really given life to your father."

Nor did it seem as though he should lose it again. His pleasure in the triumphs of his little daughter had made a dear, affectionate man of him, an excellent head of his household, and cured him completely of his own hopeless passion for mechanics. She reigned as queen in the realm wherein he could never have risen to eminence. His sole ambition was to serve her in the execution of the ingenious works which she created with ever-increasing skill and brilliance.

The fame of the young inventor began to travel abroad. She received an invitation to exhibit the model of an electro-magnetic motor, which had attracted attention in England, at a technical exhibition in London. It was to be packed up next day. Gabrielle coaxed a promise from her parents to journey with her in the spring to the promised land of machines. Before going to bed she laughed and jested and frolicked like the child she still was, in spite of her wits and her fifteen years.

At dawn she suddenly awoke, her heart beating, bathed in perspiration. In a nightmare she had seen her motor immovable, defying all effort to start it. It seemed to possess a will of its own, mocked her anxious nervous endeavours, stared at her. . . .

Cold shivers ran over her; she could not rid herself of the terror which closed in upon her. Then she felt the irresistible desire to be satisfied of the existence of her work, her idea!

Rising stealthily, she donned her soft slippers and bath-gown, and crept cautiously from her room so as to wake no one. Noiselessly she hurried along the heavily carpeted passage, down the stairs to the third door on the left, and entered the workshop.

The windows were curtained, there was an uncanny gloom. The young girl, usually the embodiment of caution and composure, shook with a fever of flurry and excitement. She did not wish to be discovered, to be reproached by her parents. Swiftly to switch on the current, to see her work in motion, to hear the breath of its power, the smooth running of the metal wheels!

She stretched out her arm to the source of power . . . and she, whose fingers seemed to be gifted with sight, she who had hardly done a hasty thing in her life, mistakes, touches the wrong, the live wire. . . .

Frau Teufenberg was an early riser. Day by day she was wont to go betimes into her daughter's adjoining room, to sit by her bedside and gaze on her and wait for her waking. When Gabrielle

opened her eyes her first glance met her mother's look; the first word she heard and uttered was a word of love.

Entering this morning, Cecilia found the bed empty, and called back into the bedroom: "Dear me, gone already; Gabriel, only imagine, she is already up."

"She must be in the workshop," he answered; "I will follow her at once." And he dressed and hurried down.

It was a dull March morning. As Teufenberg stepped out on to the landing, he noticed the servants moving about quickly like shadows, in manifest terror, sobbing and wringing their hands and passing in and out of the workshop door. "The master, the master!" they whispered as they caught sight of him.

He shudders, a deadly fear seizes him. What ails them? What dreadful thing is it they see? For one instant he pauses. Then he rushes down the stairs to the workshop door.

"Do not enter, for heaven's sake!" they cry, and crowd into his way.

He pushes them aside and enters, the servants following timidly at a distance.

Everything in the great smoke-stained apartment is still and motionless, everything that used to puff and whirl and swing and turn at the bidding of the little mistress. She too, is still and motionless, lies dead at the foot of her masterpiece.

Teufenberg, in helpless horror, stares at the white lifeless form. Suddenly he utters a piercing cry of despair: "Gabrielle! . . . child! . . ."

But the child makes no reply.

No one dared to touch her. He bore her upstairs, laid her on her couch, and two days later into her coffin, which he never left until it was taken up, nor withdrew his gaze for one moment at the solemn funeral. His wife leaned upon his arm; he was not conscious of her presence, nor saw his sons who, at their mother's wish, had hastened home, whence their professions had long since taken them.

The priest had spoken the benediction, the notes of the funeral hymn died away; amid clouds of incense the coffin was lowered into the depth. He was handed a spade with the first clod that should follow the pilgrim into the pit. As he let it glide down softly, his wife thought: "Poor wretch, there goes thy life down with it."

She had borne herself bravely all this time. When she returned to the house from which the soul had fled, her anguish overpowered her, and she said, with just a shadow of reproach: "Gabriel, I too have lost my child," and moved towards him and held out her hand. But he avoided her. Her sons took her in their arms, and the elder asked: "May I stay with you? I will stay gladly. Shall I go or stay, father?"

Teufenberg shrugged his shoulders. The old chill light was in his eyes.

"What shall I do, father?" the son asked again; "shall I go or stay?"

"It is all the same to me."

He is in flourishing health, eats and drinks, dresses with care, reads the papers, occasionally even a book, he takes his wife out for walks or to the theatre or a concert, but impression he receives none. Nothing excites his sympathy. The flame that illumined and warmed him is extinguished.

Everything in existence is all the same to him.

RICHARD VOLKMANN

1830–1891

THE SAD TALE OF SEVEN KISSES

It is quite a while ago, I think, since one day the dear God called the angel Gabriel to Him, as He often does, and said, "Thou, Gabriel, go and open the slide and look down! Methinks I hear some crying!" Gabriel went and did as the dear God said, put his hand up to his eyes because the sunlight dazzled him, looked all around, and finally said, "Down there is a long green meadow; at one end sits Barbelie pasturing her geese, at the other sits Christoph pasturing his pigs, and both of them are weeping to melt a heart of stone."

"Indeed!" said the dear God. "Go away, you tall fellow, and let Me see."

When He had looked He found it was just as Gabriel had said.

And this was how it came that Christoph and Barbelie were weeping so pitifully. Christoph and Barbelie loved each other dearly; one of them took care of the geese and the other took care of the pigs, and so it was a very suitable match, there being no disparity of rank. They made up their minds to be married, and they thought being fond of each other was a good enough reason. But here their employers differed from them. So they were obliged to be content with a betrothal. Now, as it is well to be methodical in all things, and as kissing plays an important part in betrothals, they had come to an agreement to the effect that seven kisses in the morning and seven kisses in the evening would be quite the proper thing. For a while all went well, the seven kisses being duly given and received at the appointed time. But, on the morning of the day when this story occurred, it came about that, just as the seventh kiss was coming around, Barbelie's pet goose and Christoph's pet pig had a falling-out over their breakfast, threatening to end in a serious *mêlée*. To settle this difficulty it was necessary for the two to stop short of the proper number. Later, when they were sitting lonely and far apart by the edge of the meadow, it occurred to them how very bad a thing this was, and they both

began to weep, and were still weeping when the dear God looked down.

The dear God thought at first that in the course of time their sorrow would subside of itself; but when the sound of weeping waxed louder and louder, and Christoph's pet pig and Barbelie's pet goose began to grow sad for sympathy, and to make woebegone faces, He said, " I will help them! Whatever they wish for this day shall come true."

But as it was the two had but one thought; as each looked in the direction where the other one sat, and neither could see the other, for the meadow was long and there was a bush in the middle, Christoph thought, " If I were but over where the geese are! " and Barbelie sighed, " Oh, could I but be near the pigs! "

All at once Christoph found himself sitting by the geese, and Barbelie was with the pigs; but for all that they were not together, and there was still no possibility of correcting that wrong number.

Then thought Christoph: " Barbelie very likely wanted to make me a little visit "; and Barbelie thought, " No doubt Christoph has gone around to see me! " " Oh, if I could but be with my geese! " " Oh, if I could but be with my pigs! "

So Barbelie sat once more beside her geese, and Christoph sat beside his pigs, and so it went turn and turn about all day, because they always wished past each other. And so to this day they are short of that seventh morning kiss. Christoph, to be sure, was all for making it up that same evening when they both came home tired to death with wishing, but Barbelie assured him it wouldn't do a bit of good, and that there was no possibility of getting things straightened out again.

And when the dear God saw how the two had been wishing themselves away from each other, He said: " Well, this is a nice kettle of fish. But what I have once said I *have* said! There is no help for it! " He made up His mind then and there never to grant lovers' wishes rashly in future, before having made careful inquiries as to what it was they wanted. Later, I am told, He once told Gabriel confidentially that it was really a great pity that their wishes were so very rarely of a kind that He could grant them; and a long, long time ago, when I applied to Him in a similar affair, He did not so much as give me a hearing. Later Gabriel told me this story, and then I ceased to wonder.

PAUL VON HEYSE

1830–1914

THE FURY

(L'ARRABIATA)

THE day had scarcely dawned. Over Vesuvius hung one broad grey stripe of mist, stretching across as far as Naples, and darkening all the small towns along the coast. The sea lay calm. Along the shore of the narrow creek that lies beneath the Sorrento cliffs, fishermen and their wives were at work already, some with giant cables drawing their boats to land, with the nets that had been cast the night before, while others were rigging their craft, trimming the sails, or fetching out oars and masts from the great grated vaults that have been built deep into the rocks for shelter to the tackle overnight. Nowhere an idle hand; even the very aged, who had long given up going to sea, fell into the long chain of those who were hauling in the nets. Here and there, on some flat housetop, an old woman stood and spun, or busied herself about her grand-children, whom their mother had left to help her husband.

"Do you see, Rachela? yonder is our padre curato," said one to a little thing of ten, who brandished a small spindle by her side; "Antonio is to row him over to Capri. Madre Santissima! but the reverend signore's eyes are dull with sleep!" and she waved her hand to a benevolent-looking little priest, who was settling himself in the boat, and spreading out upon the bench his carefully tucked-up skirts.

The men upon the quay had dropped their work to see their pastor off, who bowed and nodded kindly, right and left.

"What for must he go to Capri, granny?" asked the child. "Have the people there no priest of their own, that they must borrow ours?"

"Silly thing!" returned the granny. "Priests they have in plenty—and the most beautiful of churches, and a hermit too, which is more than we have. But there lives a great signora, who once lived here; she was so very ill! Many's the time our padre had to go and take the Most Holy to her, when they thought she could not live the night. But with the Blessed Virgin's help she

got strong and well, and was able to bathe every day in the sea. When she went away, she left a fine heap of ducats behind her for our church, and for the poor; and she would not go, they say, until our padre promised to go and see her over there, that she might confess to him as before. It is quite wonderful, the store she lays by him! Indeed, and we have cause to bless ourselves for having a curato who has gifts enough for an archbishop, and is in such request with all the great folks. The Madonna be with him! " she cried, and waved her hand again, as the boat was about to put from shore.

" Are we to have fair weather, my son? " inquired the little priest, with an anxious look toward Naples.

" The sun is not yet up," the young man answered; " when he comes, he will easily do for that small trifle of mist."

" Off with you, then! that we may arrive before the heat."

Antonio was just reaching for his long oar to shove away the boat, when suddenly he paused, and fixed his eyes upon the summit of the steep path that leads down from Sorrento to the water. A tall and slender girlish figure had become visible upon the heights, and was now hastily stepping down the stones, waving her handkerchief. She had a small bundle under her arm, and her dress was mean and poor. Yet she had a distinguished if somewhat savage way of throwing back her head, and the dark tress wreathed around it was like a diadem.

" What have we to wait for? " inquired the curato.

" There is some one coming who wants to go to Capri—with your permission, padre. We shall not go a whit the slower. It is a slight young thing, but just eighteen."

At that moment the young girl appeared from behind the wall that bounds the winding path.

" Laurella! " cried the priest; " and what has she to do in Capri? "

Antonio shrugged his shoulders. She came up with hasty steps, her eyes fixed straight before her.

" Ha! l'Arrabiata! good-morning! " shouted one or two of the young boatmen. But for the curato's presence, they might have added more; the look of mute defiance with which the young girl received their welcome appeared to tempt the more mischievous among them.

" Good-day, Laurella! " now said the priest; " how are you? Are you coming with us to Capri? "

" If I may, padre."

" Ask Antonio there; the boat is his. Every man is master of his own, I say, as God is master of us all."

" There is half a carlino, if I may go for that? " said Laurella, without looking at the young boatman.

" You need it more than I," he muttered, and pushed aside some orange-baskets to make room: he was to sell the oranges in Capri, which little isle of rocks has never been able to grow enough for all its visitors.

" I do not choose to go for nothing," said the girl, with a slight frown of her dark eyebrows.

" Come, child," said the priest; " he is a good lad, and had rather not enrich himself with that little morsel of your poverty. Come now, and step in," and he stretched out his hand to help her, " and sit you down by me. See, now, he has spread his jacket for you, that you may sit the softer. Young folks are all alike; for one little maiden of eighteen they will do more than for ten of us reverend fathers. Nay, no excuse, Tonino. It is the Lord's own doing, that like and like should hold together."

Meantime Laurella had stepped in, and seated herself beside the padre, first putting away Antonio's jacket without a word. The young fellow let it lie, and, muttering between his teeth, he gave one vigorous push against the pier, and the little boat flew out into the open bay.

" What are you carrying there in that little bundle? " inquired the padre, as they were floating on over a calm sea, now just beginning to be lighted up with the earliest rays of the rising sun.

" Silk, thread, and a loaf, padre. The silk is to be sold at Anacapri, to a woman who makes ribbons, and the thread to another."

" Spun by yourself? "

" Yes, sir."

" You once learned to weave ribbons yourself, if I remember right? "

" I did, sir; but mother has been much worse, and I cannot stay so long from home; and a loom to ourselves we are not rich enough to buy."

" Worse, is she? Ah! dear, dear! when I was with you last, at Easter, she was up."

" The spring is always her worst time. Ever since those last great storms and the earthquakes she has been forced to keep her bed from pain."

" Pray, my child. Never slacken your prayers and petitions that the Blessed Virgin may intercede for you; and be industrious and good, that your prayers may find a hearing."

After a pause: " When you were coming toward the shore, I heard them calling after you. ' Good-morning, l' Arrabiata! ' they said. What made them call you so? It is not a nice name for a young Christian maiden, who should be meek and mild."

The young girl's brown face glowed all over, while her eyes flashed fire.

" They always mock me so, because I do not dance and sing, and

stand about to chatter, as other girls do. I might be left in peace, I think; I do *them* no harm."

"Nay, but you might be civil. Let others dance and sing, on whom this life sits lighter; but a kind word now and then is seemly even from the most afflicted."

Her dark eyes fell, and she drew her eyebrows closer over them, as if she would have hidden them.

They went on a while in silence. The sun now stood resplendent above the mountain chain; only the tip of Mount Vesuvius towered beyond the group of clouds that had gathered about its base; and on the Sorrento plains the houses were gleaming white from the dark green of their orange-gardens.

"Have you heard no more of that painter, Laurella?" asked the curato—"that Neapolitan, who wished so much to marry you?" She shook her head. "He came to make a picture of you. Why would you not let him?"

"What did he want it for? There are handsomer girls than I. Who knows what he would have done with it? He might have bewitched me with it, or hurt my soul, or even killed me, mother says."

"Never believe such sinful things!" said the little curato very earnestly. "Are not you ever in God's keeping, without whose will not one hair of your head can fall? And is one poor mortal with an image in his hand to prevail against the Lord? Besides, you might have seen that he was fond of you, else why should he want to marry you?"

She said nothing.

"And wherefore did you refuse him? He was an honest man, they say, and comely; and he would have kept you and your mother far better than you ever can yourself, for all your spinning and silk-winding."

"We are so poor!" she said passionately; "and mother has been ill so long, we should have become a burden to him. And then I never should have done for a signora. When his friends came to see him, he would only have been ashamed of me."

"How can you say so? I tell you the man was good and kind; he would even have been willing to settle in Sorrento. It will not be so easy to find another, sent straight from heaven to be the saving of you, as this man, indeed, appeared to be."

"I want no husband—I never shall," she said, very stubbornly, half to herself.

"Is this a vow? or do you mean to be a nun?"

She shook her head.

"The people are not so wrong who call you wilful, although the name they give you is not kind. Have you ever considered that you stand alone in the world, and that your perverseness must

make your sick mother's illness worse to bear, her life more bitter? And what sound reason can you have to give for rejecting an honest hand, stretched out to help you and your mother? Answer me, Laurella."

"I have a reason," she said reluctantly, and speaking low; "but it is one I cannot give."

"Not give! not give to me? not to your confessor, whom you surely know to be your friend—or is he not?"

Laurella nodded.

"Then, child, unburden your heart. If your reason be a good one, I shall be the very first to uphold you in it. Only you are young, and know so little of the world. A time may come when you will find cause to regret a chance of happiness thrown away for some foolish fancy now."

Shyly she threw a furtive glance over to the other end of the boat where the young boatman sat, rowing fast. His woollen cap was pulled deep down over his eyes; he was gazing far across the water, with averted head, sunk, as it appeared, in his own meditations.

The priest observed her look, and bent his ear down closer.

"You did not know my father?" she whispered, while a dark look gathered in her eyes.

"Your father, child! Why, your father died when you were ten years old. What can your father (Heaven rest his soul in paradise!) have to do with this present perversity of yours?"

"You did not know him, padre; you did not know that mother's illness was caused by him alone."

"And how?"

"By his ill-treatment of her; he beat her and trampled upon her. I well remember the nights when he came home in his fits of frenzy. She never said a word, and did everything he bade her. Yet he would beat her so, my heart felt ready to break. I used to cover up my head and pretend to be asleep, but I cried all night. And then, when he saw her lying on the floor, quite suddenly he would change, and lift her up and kiss her, till she screamed and said he smothered her. Mother forbade me ever to say a word of this; but it wore her out. And in all these long years since father died, she has never been able to get well again. And if she should soon die—which God forbid!—I know who it was that killed her."

The little curato's head wagged slowly to and fro; he seemed uncertain how far to acquiesce in the young girl's reasons. At length he said: "Forgive him, as your mother has forgiven! And turn your thoughts from such distressing pictures, Laurella; there may be better days in store for you, which will make you forget the past."

"Never shall I forget that!" she said, and shuddered. "And

you must know, padre, it is the reason why I have resolved to remain unmarried. I never will be subject to a man who may beat and then caress me. Were a man now to want to beat or kiss me, I could defend myself; but mother could not—neither from his blows nor kisses—because she loved him. Now, I will never so love a man as to be made ill and wretched by him."

"You are but a child, and you talk like one who knows nothing at all of life. Are all men like that poor father of yours? Do all ill-treat their wives, and give vent to every whim and gust of passion? Have you never seen a good man yet? or known good wives, who live in peace and harmony with their husbands?"

"But nobody ever knew how father was to mother; she would have died sooner than complain or tell of him, and all because she loved him. If this be love—if love can close our lips when they should cry out for help—if it is to make us suffer without resistance, worse than even our worst enemy could make us suffer—then, I say, I never will be fond of mortal man."

"I tell you you are childish; you know not what you are saying. When your time comes, you are not likely to be consulted whether you choose to fall in love or not." After a pause, he added, "And that painter: did you think he could have been cruel?"

"He made those eyes I have seen my father make when he begged my mother's pardon and took her in his arms to make it up. I know those eyes. A man may make such eyes, and yet find it in his heart to beat a wife who never did a thing to vex him! It made my flesh creep to see those eyes again."

After this she would not say another word. The curato also remained silent. He bethought himself of more than one wise saying, wherewith the maiden might have been admonished; but he refrained in consideration of the young boatman, who had been growing rather restless toward the close of this confession.

When, after two hours' rowing, they reached the little bay of Capri, Antonio took the padre in his arms, and carried him through the last few ripples of shallow water, to set him reverently down upon his legs on dry land. But Laurella did not wait for him to wade back and fetch her. Gathering up her little petticoat, holding in one hand her wooden shoes and in the other her little bundle, with one splashing step or two she had reached the shore. "I have some time to stay at Capri," said the priest. "You need not wait —I may not perhaps return before to-morrow. When you get home, Laurella, remember me to your mother; I will come and see her within the week. You mean to go back before it gets dark?"

"If I find an opportunity," answered the girl, turning all her attention to her skirts.

"I must return, you know," said Antonio, in a tone which he

believed to be one of great indifference. " I shall wait here till the Ave Maria. If you should not come, it is the same to me."

" You must come," interposed the little priest; " you never can leave your mother all alone at night. Is it far you have to go? "

" To a vineyard by Anacapri."

" And I to Capri. So now God bless you, child—and you, my son.

Laurella kissed his hand, and let one farewell drop, for the padre and Antonio to divide between them. Antonio, however, appropriated no part of it to himself; he pulled off his cap exclusively to the padre, without even looking at Laurella. But after they had turned their backs, he let his eyes travel but a short way with the padre, as he went toiling over the deep bed of small, loose stones; he soon sent them after the maiden, who, turning to the right, had begun to climb the heights, holding one hand above her eyes to protect them from the scorching sun. Just before the path disappeared behind high walls, she stopped, as if to gather breath, and looked behind her. At her feet lay the marina; the rugged rocks rose high around her; the sea was shining in the rarest of its deep-blue splendour. The scene was surely worth a moment's pause. But, as chance would have it, her eyes, in glancing past Antonio's boat, met Antonio's own, which had been following her as she climbed.

Each made a slight movement, as persons do who would excuse themselves for some mistake; and then, with her darkest look, the maiden went her way.

Hardly one hour had passed since noon, and yet for the last two Antonio had been sitting waiting on the bench before the fishers' tavern. He must have been very much preoccupied with something, for he jumped up every moment to step out into the sunshine, and look carefully up and down the roads, which parting right and left, lead to the only two little towns upon the island. He did not altogether trust the weather, he then said to the hostess of the osteria; to be sure, it was clear enough, but he did not quite like that tint of sea and sky. Just so it had looked, he said, before the last awful storm, when the English family had been so nearly lost; surely she must remember it?

No, indeed, she said, she didn't.

Well, if the weather should happen to change before night, she was to think of him, he said.

" Have you many fine folk over there? " she asked him, after a while.

" They are only just beginning; as yet, the season has been bad enough; those who came to bathe came late."

"The spring came late. Have you not been earning more than we at Capri?"

"Not enough to give me macaroni twice a week, if I had had nothing but the boat—only a letter now and then to take to Naples, or a gentleman to row out into the open sea, that he might fish. But you know I have an uncle who is rich; he owns more than one fine orange-garden; and, 'Tonio,' says he to me, 'while I live you shall not suffer want; and when I am gone you will find that I have taken care of you.' And so, with God's help, I got through the winter."

"Has he children, this uncle who is rich?"

"No, he never married; he was long in foreign parts, and many a good piastre he has laid together. He is going to set up a great fishing business and set me over it, to see the rights of it."

"Why, then, you are a made man, Tonino!"

The young boatman shrugged his shoulders. "Every man has his own burden," said he, starting up again to have another look at the weather, turning his eyes right and left, although he must have known that there can be no weather side but one.

"Let me fetch you another bottle," said the hostess; "your uncle can well afford to pay for it."

"Not more than one glass; it is a fiery wine you have in Capri, and my head is hot already."

"It does not heat the blood; you may drink as much of it as you like. And here is my husband coming; so you must sit a while and talk to him."

And in fact, with his nets over his shoulder, and his red cap upon his curly head, down came the comely padrone of the osteria. He had been taking a dish of fish to that great lady, to set before the little curato. As soon as he caught sight of the young boatman, he began waving him a most cordial welcome; and he came to sit just beside him on the bench, chattering and asking questions. Just as his wife was bringing her second bottle of pure unadulterated Capri, they heard the crisp sand crunch, and Laurella was seen approaching from the left-hand road to Anacapri. She nodded slightly in salutation; then stopped, and hesitated.

Antonio sprang from his seat. "I must go," he said. "It is a young Sorrento girl, who came over with the signor curato in the morning. She has to get back to her sick mother before night."

"Well, well, time enough yet before night," observed the fisherman; "time enough to take a glass of wine. Wife, I say, another glass!"

"I thank you; I had rather not"; and Laurella kept her distance.

"Fill the glasses, wife; fill them both, I say; she only wants a little pressing."

" Don't," interposed the lad. " It is a wilful head of her own she has; a saint could not persuade her to do what she does not choose." And, taking a hasty leave, he ran down to the boat, loosened the rope, and stood waiting for Laurella. Again she bent her head to the hostess, and slowly approached the water, with lingering steps. She looked around on every side, as if in hopes of seeing some other passenger. But the marina was deserted. The fishermen were asleep, or rowing about the coast with rods or nets; a few women and children sat before their doors, spinning or sleeping; such strangers as had come over in the morning were waiting for the cool of the evening to return. She had not time to look about her long; before she could prevent him, Antonio had seized her in his arms and carried her to the boat, as if she had been an infant. He leaped in after her, and with a stroke or two of his oar they were in deep water.

She had seated herself at the end of the boat, half turning her back to him, so that he could only see her profile. She wore a sterner look than ever; the low, straight brow was shaded by her hair; the rounded lips were firmly closed; only the delicate nostril occasionally gave a wilful quiver. After they had gone on a while in silence, she began to feel the scorching of the sun; and, unloosening her bundle, she threw the handkerchief over her head, and began to make her dinner of the bread; for in Capri she had eaten nothing.

Antonio did not stand this long; he fetched out a couple of the oranges with which the baskets had been filled in the morning. " Here is something to eat with your bread, Laurella," he said. " Don't think I kept them for you; they had rolled out of the basket, and I only found them when I brought the baskets back to the boat."

" Eat them yourself; bread is enough for me."

" They are refreshing in this heat, and you have had to walk so far."

" They gave me a drink of water, and that refreshed me."

" As you please," he said, and let them drop into the basket.

Silence again. The sea was smooth as glass. Not a ripple was heard against the prow. Even the white sea-birds that roost among the caves of Capri pursued their prey with soundless flight.

" You might take the oranges to your mother," again commenced Tonino.

" We have oranges at home, and when they are gone I can go and buy some more."

" Nay, take these to her, and give them to her with my compliments."

" She does not know you."

" You could tell her who I am."

"I do not know you either."

It was not the first time that she had denied him thus. One Sunday of last year, when that painter had first come to Sorrento, Antonio had chanced to be playing *boccia* with some other young fellows in the little piazza by the chief street.

There, for the first time, had the painter caught sight of Laurella, who, with her pitcher on her head, had passed by without taking any notice of him. The Neapolitan, struck by her appearance, stood still and gazed after her, not heeding that he was standing in the very midst of the game, which, with two steps, he might have cleared. A very ungentle ball came knocking against his shins, as a reminder that this was not the spot to choose for meditation. He looked round, as if in expectation of some excuse. But the young boatman who had thrown the ball stood silent among his friends, in such an attitude of defiance that the stranger had found it more advisable to go his ways and avoid discussion. Still, this little encounter had been spoken of, particularly at the time when the painter had been pressing his suit to Laurella. "I do not even know him," she said indignantly, when the painter asked her whether it was for the sake of that uncourteous lad she now refused him. But she had heard that piece of gossip, and known Antonio well enough when she had met him since.

And now they sat together in this boat, like two most deadly enemies, while their hearts were beating fit to kill them. Antonio's usually so good-humoured face was heated to scarlet; he struck the oars so sharply that the foam flew over to where Laurella sat, while his lips moved as if muttering angry words. She pretended not to notice, wearing her most unconscious look, bending over the edge of the boat, and letting the cool water pass between her fingers. Then she threw off her handkerchief again, and began to smooth her hair, as though she had been alone. Only her eyebrows twitched, and she held up her wet hands in vain attempts to cool her burning cheeks.

Now they were well out in the open sea. The island was far behind, and the coast before them lay yet distant in the hot haze. Not a sail was within sight, far or near—nor even a passing gull to break the stillness. Antonio looked all round, evidently ripening some hasty reflection. The colour faded suddenly from his cheek, and he dropped his oars. Laurella looked round involuntarily—fearless, yet attentive.

"I must make an end of this," the young fellow burst forth. "It has lasted too long already! I only wonder that it has not killed me! You say you do not know me? And all this time you must have seen me pass you like a madman, my whole heart full of what I had to tell you; and then you only made your crossest mouth, and turned your back upon me."

" What had I to say to you? " she curtly replied. " I may have seen that you were inclined to meddle with me, but I do not choose to be on people's wicked tongues for nothing. I do not mean to have you for a husband—neither you nor any other."

" Nor any other? So you will not always say! You say so now, because you would not have that painter. Bah! you were but a child! You will feel lonely enough yet, some day; and then, wild as you are, you will take the next best who comes to hand."

" Who knows? Which of us can see the future? It may be that I will change my mind. What is that to you? "

" What is it to me? " he flew out, starting to his feet, while the small boat leaped and danced; " what is it to me, you say? You know well enough! I tell you that man shall perish miserably to whom you shall prove kinder than you have been to me! "

" And to you, what did I ever promise? Am I to blame if you be mad? What right have you to me? "

" Ah! I know," he cried, " my right is written nowhere. It has not been put in Latin by any lawyer, nor stamped with any seal. But this I feel: I have just the right to you that I have to heaven, if I die an honest Christian. Do you think I could look on and see you go to church with another man, and see the girls go by and shrug their shoulders at me? "

" You can do as you please. I am not going to let myself be frightened by all those threats. I also mean to do as I please."

" You shall not say so long! " and his whole frame shook with passion. " I am not the man to let my whole life be spoiled by a stubborn wench like you! You are in my power here, remember, and may be made to do my bidding."

She could not repress a start, but her eyes flashed bravely on him.

" You may kill me if you dare," she said slowly.

" I do nothing by halves," he said, and his voice sounded choked and hoarse. " There is room for us both in the sea. I cannot help thee, child "—he spoke the last words dreamily, almost pitifully—" but we must both go down together—both at once—and now! " he shouted, and snatched her in his arms. But at the same moment he drew back his right hand; the blood gushed out; she had bitten him fiercely.

" Ha! can I be made to do your bidding? " she cried, and thrust him from her, with one sudden movement; " am I here in your power? " and she leaped into the sea, and sank.

She rose again directly; her scanty skirts clung close; her long hair, loosened by the waves, hung heavy about her neck. She struck out valiantly, and, without uttering a sound, she began to swim steadily from the boat toward the shore.

With senses benumbed by sudden terror, he stood, with outstretched neck, looking after her, his eyes fixed as though they had just been witness to a miracle. Then, giving himself a shake, he seized his oars, and began rowing after her with all the strength he had, while all the time the bottom of the boat was reddening fast with the blood that kept streaming from his hand.

Rapidly as she swam, he was at her side in a moment. "For the love of our most Holy Virgin," he cried, "get into the boat! I have been a madman! God alone can tell what so suddenly darkened my brain. It came upon me like a flash of lightning, and set me all on fire. I knew not what I did or said. I do not even ask you to forgive me, Laurella, only to come into the boat again, and not to risk your life!"

She swam on as though she had not heard him.

"You can never swim to land, I tell you, it is two miles off. Think of your mother! If you should come to grief, I should die of horror."

She measured the distance with her eye, and then, without answering him one word, she swam up to the boat, and laid her hands upon the edge; he rose to help her in. As the boat tilted over to one side with the girl's weight, his jacket that was lying on the bench slipped into the water. Agile as she was, she swung herself on board without assistance, and gained her former seat. As soon as he saw that she was safe, he took to his oars again, while she began quietly wringing out her dripping clothes, and shaking the water from her hair. As her eyes fell upon the bottom of the boat, and saw the blood, she gave a quick look at the hand which held the oar as if it had been unhurt.

"Take this," she said, and held out her handkerchief. He shook his head, and went on rowing. After a time she rose, and, stepping up to him, bound the handkerchief firmly round the wound, which was very deep. Then, heedless of his endeavours to prevent her, she took an oar, and, seating herself opposite him, began to row with steady strokes, keeping her eyes from looking toward him —fixed upon the oar that was scarlet with his blood. Both were pale and silent. As they drew near land, such fishermen as they met began shouting after Antonio and gibing at Laurella; but neither of them moved an eyelid, or spoke one word.

The sun stood yet high over Procida when they landed at the marina. Laurella shook out her petticoat, now nearly dry, and jumped on shore. The old spinning woman, who in the morning had seen them start, was still upon her terrace. She called down, "What is that upon your hand, Tonino? My God! the boat is full of blood!"

"It is nothing, comare," the young fellow replied. "I tore my hand against a nail that was sticking out too far; it will be well

to-morrow. It is only this confounded ready blood of mine that always makes a thing look worse than it is."

"Let me come and bind it up, comparello. Stop one moment; I will go and fetch the herbs, and come to you directly."

"Never trouble yourself, comare. It has been dressed already; to-morrow morning it will be all over and forgotten. I have a healthy skin that heals directly."

"Addio!" said Laurella, turning to the path that goes winding up the cliffs. "Good-night!" he answered, without looking at her; and then taking his oars and baskets from the boat, and climbing up the small stone stairs, he went into his own hut.

He was alone in his two little rooms, and began to pace them up and down. Cooler than upon the dead calm sea, the breeze blew fresh through the small unglazed windows, which could only be closed with wooden shutters. The solitude was soothing to him. He stooped before the little image of the Virgin, devoutly gazing upon the glory round the head (made of stars cut out in silver paper). But he did not want to pray. What reason had he to pray, now that he had lost all he had ever hoped for?

And this day appeared to last for ever. He did so long for night! for he was weary, and more exhausted by the loss of blood than he would have cared to own. His hand was very sore. Seating himself upon a little stool, he untied the handkerchief that bound it; the blood, so long repressed, gushed out again; all round the wound the hand was swollen high.

He washed it carefully, cooling it in the water; then he clearly saw the marks of Laurella's teeth.

"She was right," he said; "I was a brute, and deserved no better. I will send her back the handkerchief by Giuseppe to-morrow. Never shall she set eyes on me again." And he washed the handkerchief with the greatest care, and spread it out in the sun to dry.

And having bound up his hand again, as well as he could manage with his teeth and his left hand, he threw himself upon his bed and closed his eyes.

He was soon waked up from a sort of slumber by the rays of the bright moonlight, and also by the pain of his hand; he had just risen for more cold water to soothe its throbbings when he heard the sound of some one at the door. Laurella stood before him.

She came in without a question, took off the handkerchief she had tied over her head, and placed her little basket upon the table; then she drew a deep breath.

"You are come to fetch your handkerchief," he said. "You need not have taken that trouble. In the morning I would have asked Giuseppe to take it to you."

"It is not the handkerchief," she said quickly. "I have been up among the hills to gather herbs to stop the blood; see here." And she lifted the lid of her little basket.

"Too much trouble," he said, not in bitterness—"far too much trouble. I am better, much better; but if I were worse, it would be no more than I deserve. Why did you come at such a time? If any one should see you? You know how they talk, even when they don't know what they are saying."

"I care for no one's talk," she said passionately. "I came to see your hand, and put the herbs upon it; you cannot do it with your left."

"It is not worth while, I tell you."

"Let me see it then, if I am to believe you."

She took his hand, that was not able to prevent her, and unbound the linen. When she saw the swelling, she shuddered, and gave a cry: "Jesus Maria!"

"It is a little swollen," he said; "it will be over in four-and-twenty hours."

She shook her head. "It will certainly be a week before you can go to sea."

"More likely a day or two; and, if not, what matters?"

She had fetched a basin, and began carefully washing out the wound, which he suffered passively, like a child. She then laid on the healing leaves, which at once relieved the burning pain, and finally bound it up with the linen she had brought with her.

When it was done: "I thank you," he said. "And now, if you would do me one more kindness, forgive the madness that came over me; forget all I said and did. I cannot tell how it came to pass; certainly it was not your fault—not yours. And never shall you hear from me again one word to vex you."

She interrupted him. "It is I who have to beg your pardon. I should have spoken differently. I might have explained it better, and not enraged you with my sullen ways. And now that bite——"

"It was in self-defence; it was high time to bring me to my senses. As I said before, it is nothing at all to signify. Do not talk of being forgiven; you only did me good, and I thank you for it. And now, here is your handkerchief; take it with you."

He held it to her, but yet she lingered, hesitated, and appeared to have some inward struggle. At length she said: "You have lost your jacket, and by my fault; and I know that all the money for the oranges was in it. I did not think of this till afterward. I cannot replace it now; we have not so much at home—or, if we had, it would be mother's. But this I have—this silver cross. That painter left it on the table the day he came for the last time. I have never looked at it all this while, and do not care to keep it in my box; if you were to sell it? It must be worth a few piastres,

mother says. It might make up the money you have lost; and if not quite, I could earn the rest by spinning at night when mother is asleep."

"Nothing will make me take it," he said shortly, pushing away the bright new cross, which she had taken from her pocket.

"You must," she said; "how can you tell how long your hand may keep you from your work? There it lies; and nothing can make me so much as look at it again."

"Drop it in the sea, then."

"It is no present I want to make you; it is no more than is your due; it is only fair."

"Nothing from you can be due to me; and hereafter when we chance to meet, if you would do me a kindness, I beg you not to look my way. It would make me feel you were thinking of what I have done. And now good-night; and let this be the last word said."

She laid the handkerchief in the basket, and also the cross, and closed the lid. But when he looked into her face, he started. Great heavy drops were rolling down her cheeks; she let them flow unheeded.

"Maria Santissima!" he cried. "Are you ill? You are trembling from head to foot!"

"It is nothing," she said; "I must go home"; and with unsteady steps she was moving to the door, when suddenly she leaned her brow against the wall, and gave way to a fit of bitter sobbing. Before he could go to her she turned upon him suddenly, and fell upon his neck.

"I cannot bear it!" she cried, clinging to him as a dying thing to life—"I cannot bear it! I cannot let you speak so kindly, and bid me go, with all this on my conscience. Beat me! trample on me! curse me! Or if it can be that you love me still, after all I have done to you, take me and keep me, and do with me as you please; only do not send me away so!" She could say no more for sobbing.

Speechless, he held her a while in his arms. "If I can love you still!" he cried at last. "Holy Mother of God! Do you think that all my best heart's blood has gone from me through that little wound? Don't you hear it hammering now, as though it would burst my breast and go to you? But if you say this to try me, or because you pity me, I can forget it. You are not to think you owe me this, because you know what I have suffered for you."

"No!" she said very resolutely, looking up from his shoulder into his face, with her tearful eyes; "it is because I love you; and let me tell you, it was because I always feared to love you that I was so cross. I will be so different now. I never could bear again to pass you in the street without one look! And lest you should

ever feel a doubt, I will kiss you, that you may say, ' She kissed me '; and Laurella kisses no man but her husband."

She kissed him thrice, and, escaping from his arms, " And now good-night, amor mio, cara vita mia! " she said. " Lie down to sleep, and let your hand get well. Do not come with me; I am afraid of no man, save of you alone."

And so she slipped out, and soon disappeared in the shadow of the wall.

He remained standing by the window, gazing far out over the calm sea, while all the stars in heaven appeared to flit before his eyes.

The next time the little curato sat in his confessional, he sat smiling to himself. Laurella had just risen from her knees after a very long confession.

" Who would have thought it? " he said musingly—" that the Lord would so soon have taken pity upon that wayward little heart? And I had been reproaching myself for not having adjured more sternly that ill demon of perversity. Our eyes are but short-sighted to see the ways of Heaven! Well, may God bless her, I say, and let me live to go to sea with Laurella's eldest born, rowing me in his father's place! Ah! well, indeed! l' Arrabiata! "

PAUL VON HEYSE

THE HUNGARIAN COUNTESS

In the first quarter of the last century a countess, who through her great beauty and cleverness was famed far beyond the frontiers of her country, and whose tragic end was talked of for many years, lived in a fine castle on the western border of Hungary.

Countess Helene S—— was a member of an old Austrian noble family, and although she could have chosen a husband from amongst a host of young and brilliant aristocrats, she accepted the oldest and least attractive of her many admirers, the fifty-year-old Count N——y, and followed him far from her home to his Hungarian estates. Her husband, who had left the army on account of a serious fall from his horse, seemed the most unlikely man to attract this beautiful girl, nor could his fortune, which hardly equalled her own, explain her strange choice. Only her immediate relatives, who knew her seriousness and depth of character, realised that for years she had wished to enter a convent, and that she had now chosen the still heavier burden of acting as companion and attendant to an ageing husband. Her mother warned her in vain. Even when a child she would accept nobody's counsel, and only followed the dictates of her heart, keeping them secret from every one. Nobody knew then if in the five years of her marriage she had found cause to regret her choice. At her husband's death she wore no excessive mourning; people would have thought it hypocritical if she had, though the dead man had been held in high esteem. Yet when the young widow of twenty-three, even after the year of mourning, still persisted in her lonely life at the castle, and only visited her parents for a few weeks at rare intervals, people concluded that her sorrow was deeper than they had expected her to feel.

The boy, who had been born to her a year before her husband's death, was a very delicate child, and had been spared to her only through the unselfish mothering she lavished on him. When he reached the years of childhood in which the mental faculties begin to develop, it was found that his brain remained unresponsive, and it was only with the greatest difficulty and the most untiring patience that the unfortunate boy could be taught a few simple words. Otherwise he developed into a fine good-looking youth, and his

misfortune was not at all stamped on his face; on the contrary, he possessed the beauty of his mother, and only his eyes looked dreamy and somewhat sad, like those of an over-indulged child that needed waking up. There were times when the boy was afflicted with fits of melancholy, and then his condition was apparent to any one; then only his mother could rouse him to a faint smile, in which, however, all the sweetness and nobility of his dormant mind seemed to peep out like the petals from a bursting bud. The people in the castle, the villagers, and particularly the domestic servants, were devoted to the boy.

The Countess had consulted every doctor and man of science about him. None had been able to do anything for him except to lighten the affliction by careful physical treatment, and as he reached his teens it was apparent that he would never be able to go through life unaided. His mother had been the last to give up all hope; but she finally reconciled herself to this great misfortune, and having so far borne it outwardly at least in all fortitude, she now seemed to have composed herself also inwardly and to have accepted the inevitable. She began to visit and to invite to her castle the neighbours of the surrounding estates, and when her friends pitied her she used to insist that she was far happier with her boy than many a mother with a son who in full possession of his mental as well as his physical powers seems to delight in employing them only to indulge in excesses and to bring dishonour upon himself and his family.

When, on her return from one of these visits, and they were never long, she heard from afar the violin-playing of her son, who had come out to meet her in the company of his old servant; when she saw his fine head against the instrument, his long fair curls reaching to his shoulders, his eyes lighting up with joy as he looked at her, she did not in the least feel an unhappy mother, and one could understand the reply she gave to the friends who pitied her.

Music was the only language the young Count ever mastered. Unfortunately Countess Helene had never taken any interest in music herself, and therefore could not help her son, and as his instructor, the old village schoolmaster, had been transferred to a new post and his successor was unmusical, she had advertised for a music-teacher. Of the great number of replies received only one seemed promising. The letter came from a small town in Silesia; it was simply and well written in a style which made an immediate appeal to the Countess; and though no testimonials were enclosed, she wrote engaging the applicant, whose name was Georg Lindner, sending him a substantial sum for his travelling expenses, and bidding him start immediately if he felt inclined to accept the offer after he had read the exact description she gave him of her son's state.

A couple of weeks passed without bringing the new music-master. The Countess had given him up, when one evening there arrived a dust-covered weary wanderer. He was a pale, slender young man, who, in spite of his dilapidated appearance and melancholy aspect, bore himself well and seemed to flash intellect from his piercing dark eyes. He told her in simple language that he had left the money she had sent him with his mother, and had done most of the journey on foot, carrying everything for his immediate needs in his knapsack, and that his box would follow.

The Countess had him shown to his room, which lay next the apartments of the young Count. She felt somewhat disappointed, yet could not say why. The young man was what she had expected from his letter. He had not denied his poverty, and had borne himself confidently. Yet she had expected that she herself, whose beauty and rank had flustered many a high-born nobleman, would make a great impression on this unimportant youth. Not once had he cast down his gaze, and only one quick flash, as he first entered her presence and had looked on the proud stately mistress of the castle, had told her that the blood of manhood coursed through his veins.

She was astonished once more, when, on entering the dining-room a few hours later, she saw him with his arm round the shoulders of her son, as if he meant to show her what good use he had made of his time, and what a suitable companion he would be for her son in spite of his poor attire. The young Count appeared to be in high spirits, and during the meal stroked his neighbour's arm now and again, always a sign of his attachment.

After dinner the Candidate—as the young man was called in the castle—opened the piano, and by his masterly accompaniment of his pupil soon roused the Countess out of her mood, and presently his wonderful playing attracted to the corridor outside almost every servant in the castle, who came up to hear " the German " play. The Countess had never anywhere heard such playing, and the young Count had long since put aside his violin and sat enthralled, listening to some quaint Hungarian folk-songs which were now the theme of the Candidate's extemporising. " Happy! Happy! " was all he could whisper to his mother.

The two young fellows became inseparable companions. When Georg worked or composed Count Stephan would lie on his divan watching his friend, and jump up immediately he had finished, asking his tutor in clumsily-uttered disjointed words, more like a servant than a master, what they should do next. Every one soon remarked how much better the Count looked, how his eyes had brightened, his speech improved, and how much happier he seemed to be—all brought about by the original scheme for the boy's treatment which the clever German carried out.

Only when his pupil was confined to his room would Georg go out by himself, roaming about the forest and countryside for hours. He was still dressed in his old suit; yet all the womenfolk about the castle and in the village spoke about him, said what a fine fellow he was, and wondered why he had no eye for their charms and would not respond to their encouraging glances. They told each other that he must have left a sweetheart at home, that the Germans were more constant than the Hungarians, and yet that it was a pity; for he could have such a fine time if only he would use his eyes and look about him.

The Countess's maid, who was particularly enamoured of the young German, told her mistress of all the talk that went on about him; but the Countess seemed to interest herself in none of the Candidate's doings save those which immediately concerned her boy's welfare. A few weeks after Georg's arrival she had thanked him for the good influence he exercised over her son, and inquired kindly and in a motherly fashion about his people and his circumstances; but Georg had received her expressions of solicitude rather passively, told her that his quietness and shyness were inborn in him, that his father, a minor official of good repute, had, in a fit of melancholy, drowned himself, and that he himself only found life bearable through his love of music.

After this, finding that she had no influence over him, she found it incompatible with her position to treat the Candidate otherwise than with an even politeness. Georg appeared in his old shabby suit even when company arrived at the castle and he was bidden to play; on these occasions politics were frequently discussed, and he expressed his opinions fearlessly and bore himself always with his old assurance, often rousing the temper of the Countess's friends, but quickly appeasing them by his wonderful playing.

Thus months passed without the mutual relationship of the inmates of the castle changing in the slightest. Only Georg seemed different. He had grown paler, quieter, and more restless; his play had become wilder and less joyous. On some days he kept carefully out of the Countess's way, excused himself from taking his meals with the family, and disappeared for hours in the country around the castle. To Count Stephan he was always the kind, considerate, guiding friend. Boriska, the maid, again spoke to her mistress; but she told her that the spring weather often affected melancholy-inclined persons, and that this phase would pass off.

As summer came and Georg's condition, instead of improving became ever stranger, Countess Helene resolved, though she had not forgotten the previous rebuff, to speak to the young man again; she thought it her duty not only to him who had done so much for her son, but also to his mother who had allowed her son to come so far away to Hungary.

However, just then an incident occurred which drove the matter from her mind for some time.

At Christmas the owner of a neighbouring estate, Count Sandor, had returned from years of travel abroad, and already, at his first meeting with Countess Helene, who was now thirty-seven, and had arrived at the zenith of her beauty, he had shown unmistakable signs of having fallen in love with her. The Count had not taken the first friendly refusal that he received seriously, and continued to lay siege to the heart of this fine woman. The social gaieties of the winter afforded him plenty of opportunity, and almost every morning he rode into the castle on his thoroughbred to spend the day in the company of the woman he loved. She had told him of her firm resolve not to marry again, that immediately after her husband's death she had made up her mind on this point and had determined to devote the rest of her life to her poor son. Besides, any third party might after a time find the presence of this unfortunate boy an encumbrance, and sooner or later torture her by treating him with indifference. " Don't let us talk any more about the impossible," she had concluded.

Count Alexander appeared to be satisfied with her offer of a sincere and honest friendship; but after a time, his forty summers sitting but lightly upon him, his blood still rushing hotly through his veins, there came a day when, on a cross-country ride, he took the bit between his teeth and made another impetuous and ardent proposal.

She allowed him to finish, stopped her horse, and then said, " I am so sorry, Count, that you have held my wishes so lightly as your own promise. In these circumstances I must discontinue a friendship which has been very dear to me; but my mind is made up, I shall never give you another answer. *Sans rancune*, dear Count; if in a year or so's time a change of air has helped you to forget, I shall be glad to see you again."

With a flick of her whip she started off at a gentle gallop, and commenced to talk of ordinary things in her quiet way.

The Count was deeply moved; he had great difficulty in retaining his composure; and when they returned to the castle he wished to take his leave immediately. She, however, would not hear of it, and told him everything must remain that day as before; reluctantly he stayed, and a strangely silent dinner was followed by an equally uncomfortable hour in the music-room. The Countess had greeted her son and his tutor more kindly than usual; she seemed happy that the air had cleared, that she would again be left to herself with the other two.

Georg had never taken to the splendid Hungarian nobleman, and when he asked him to which piece he would treat them that evening, showing plainly that the answer he would receive was a matter

of perfect indifference to him, Georg, turning away, said, " I shall not play to-night."

" Aren't you well? " the Count asked, " or is the audience too small? "

" My reasons, Count, I may perhaps be permitted to keep to myself."

" Just as you like, Herr Lindner," quietly replied the Count, and then added pointedly, " particularly as the tone of your speech leads one to suppose that you might also strike some discords in your playing."

The young man flashed a meaning look at the Count, and exclaimed in a vibrating voice, " I know what I owe the house in which I live; at any other place I should have a different reply for you, Count." Bowing slightly he left the room.

" What have you been doing to my Musicus? " asked the Countess, who just then entered. " You must have hurt his feelings to judge by his expression. I can read his face."

" Really, Countess, it was quite inadvertently that I offended him. But this is one of my bad days; I have only to open my mouth seemingly to be rebuffed. But I must protest to you, Countess, against your partiality. You have forbidden me your door as from to-morrow, while you allow a man who has burned his wings much more badly than I have to remain in your immediate company daily."

She gazed at him bewildered.

" Indeed, I don't understand you, Count Sandor."

" Extraordinary! And you asserted only a few moments ago that you could read this young German's face."

" Your joke is in very bad taste, Count."

" Bad taste? I don't know. Yet don't take this matter too jocularly. I have only lost my heart here; but this young man looks as if he was about to lose his reason as well. However, I have your forgiveness already; so I shall be glad to have your permission to leave now, it is getting late."

He pressed her hand lightly to his lips. " Then *au revoir*, in a year's time, and a complete convalescence! " she told him, with an absent-minded expression on her fine features. Her thoughts had settled on a graver issue than the departure of the Count.

She retired to her boudoir immediately her other guests had left. Boriska had to open all the windows after she had lit the candles; her mistress felt hot and uneasy, and sat lost in thought. At ten o'clock she rang for her maid and asked her to request Herr Lindner to come to her, as she wished to speak to him. Five minutes later he knocked and entered.

" You wished to see me, Countess," he said quietly.

She did not answer at once and looked at him partly astonished,

partly perplexed, as if she had only just discovered some new trait in his character. He held her gaze unflinchingly.

" I asked you here, dear Georg," she said slowly, without asking him to be seated, " because I have something of importance to say to you, and this is better said before going to bed. You know I esteem you greatly, and am thankful for all you have done for my son. I hoped you, too, were happy in my house, and satisfied and pleased with your position. I am grieved to think I have been mistaken." She stopped here for a moment. He had turned his face away and was looking on the floor. " What makes you think that, Countess? " he asked, in a voice in which only her watchful ear could have discerned his agitation.

" You are becoming more taciturn, more misanthropic; you are getting paler and thinner, and your eyes are dull; in short, you must be suffering from some secret illness or from some great sorrow. I know your goodness of heart, your devotion to my son, perhaps you think you ought to subordinate your personal desires, your dearest wishes to his welfare; I cannot accept such a sacrifice; neither my religion nor my regard for you would allow me to take, much less to ask it, from you." Again she was silent, to give him time to think over her words, and paced to and fro over the heavy carpets. His eyes followed her, the fine womanly figure seemed to have cast a spell over him.

" And yourself, Countess? " he said at last. " Aren't you sacrificing yourself? Haven't you given up more than I can ever sacrifice to my duty? "

She stopped before him. " How can you draw comparisons! I am his mother. Besides—I have no future to think of. Let us be sensible, Georg; you are not in your right place, you are secretly straining to get away. I will write to my cousin, the Duchess D—— (you remember the lady who was here last autumn, and who wanted so much to take you away to teach her children at Vienna), and I will ask her to let you lead her house orchestra. You will be received there with open arms; I'll write to-night."

His gaze again rested on the carpet; his pale features worked in great agitation; with difficulty he composed himself as he strode to the open window. At last his answer fell tonelessly from his lips.

" Don't write that letter, Countess. Leave me to my fate, which brought me under your roof because it wished me well. If, through my unfortunate disposition, I should destroy my happiness here, you, at any rate, will be blameless: to you I am indebted to all eternity."

She looked at him sorrowfully, pityingly. " I knew it," she said. " I am not surprised; yet I wonder that I did not see it coming on long ago. Georg, you want to put me off, to keep me in the dark. You don't wish to speak of it; yet this thing must

be cleared up between us, much as I dread to speak of it. You love me, Georg! And you see yourself how mad, how hopeless it is, and that makes it impossible for you to stay on here. But you'd rather ruin yourself than fight against this passion. Isn't it so? "

He looked into her eyes, and as if it were some inconvertible law of nature affirmed, " It is so! "

She gazed on him in wonder. Never had any man—and many had sworn they loved her—told her the secret of his heart in this manner.

" And as it is so, what—are you hoping—or expecting? "

" Nothing. What could I hope? I know it—I knew it from the first day I came, it was my fate."

" Fate! Don't use the word in this frivolous way. Don't be a coward, face the facts, I might almost be your mother. I certainly thought you more level-headed, braver, Georg."

" Unfortunately, I am neither the one nor the other, though I have vainly tried to be both. I have fought against this for months. At last I had to acknowledge defeat, I had to surrender. But why talk of it any longer, it cannot interest you, and it is over."

" You are now twenty-three; you say you have never loved before, not since your childhood; yet you don't seem to have overcome your inclination to childish jealousy. Your behaviour this evening towards Count Alexander——"

" I beg your forgiveness," he interrupted. " I forgot myself for a moment, it shall never happen again." He had flushed scarlet. " I shall keep out of his way."

" You won't have to do that, for he is not coming here again; he has proposed to me several times, and I have refused him. You see I'm quite serious when I tell you that in the interests of my boy I want to have everything going on here smoothly as usual. But you'll have to be sensible, Georg, or it will be necessary for us to part. Think over what I have said and let me have your answer in a week, when I hope you will come to me and tell me with a smile that you have completely got over your infatuation. And now—good-night and happy thoughts! "

He made as if to say something, his head had dropped again, and without seeing her outstretched hand he left the room with faltering steps.

" I shall lose him, I see it coming," she told herself. Then she quickly undressed and went to bed. For hours she lay sleepless; but it was not flattered vanity, womanly weakness, or excitement that kept her awake, although the figure of the strange young man who had confessed openly the innermost thoughts of his soul stood continuously before her. She harboured no glowing sparks of passion that the breath of a stammering and infatuated lover might

have fanned into flame. She could read Georg's face, as she had told Count Alexander, and realised that their talk had been fruitless.

The sun shone into her bedroom as the sudden entrance of her maid unbidden frightened her out of her short sleep. "What has happened?" she exclaimed in apprehension.

The Candidate had suddenly been taken ill, and the groom was already on his way to fetch the doctor; but the fever had increased so alarmingly that they were hardly able to hold the young man to his bed. Quickly Countess Helene dressed and hurried to Georg's room, where she found her son in tears and in a pitiable condition by the bedside of his friend. Georg was unconscious, but as she called him by name a happy smile seemed to illuminate his features. The doctor came and looked very serious, but pronounced the case not hopeless. The illness was a long and anxious one, and the Countess ceased her personal ministrations only after the patient became conscious, thinking it better that he should not see her, and that he should be left in the hands of the nurse. He never asked for the Countess, who received daily reports of his condition from the doctor as well as from Boriska; the latter told her that the Candidate seemed quite changed, whistled all sorts of tunes, and was bright and happy.

As he went out for his first drive, the Countess stood by the open window and called down to him friendly words of congratulation, which he acknowledged, colouring slightly. He seemed taller and looser, his long hair and beard gave his features a new soft expression which was pleasing, and when he returned after an hour, a healthy red in his cheeks, greeting her gaily and thanking her for the flowers she had sent to his room, they found no difficulty in entering again upon the friendly relationship that had previously existed.

He had evidently resolved to fight down his passion, and what the Countess thought of it all it was impossible to say.

In this way the time went by and the summer was drawing to a close. On a fine mild afternoon the Countess with her son and his tutor had driven to a neighbouring village to attend the wedding of a young peasant girl who had been in service at the castle. After the ceremony, when everybody had left the church, and the strains of the village band had died down in the distance, Georg had expressed a wish to play on the organ, which seemed a particularly fine instrument, and the young Count had scrambled up beside him on the seat. Under the masterly touch of the German a Praeludium by Bach filled the old church with wonderful chords, and its walls seemed to tremble to the glorious music. The Countess sat alone in the castle pew, her large veil drawn closely around her. Twilight fell as Georg finished his inspiring playing with a grand finale, and they made their way carefully

down from the organ-loft into the nave now almost lost in darkness. There the Countess met them; she did not say a word, but softly pressed the player's hand. As he assisted her into the carriage he saw that her eyes were wet. He had never seen her cry. Why these tears should make him happy he could not say. On the way home he sat opposite her lost in happy wonderment. Nobody spoke. He could not see her face, over which her veil was closely drawn.

She was very quiet during the evening meal, and retiring early to her rooms left the two friends together. Ringing for her maid she had several trunks quickly packed, wrote several letters, gave the girl various orders, and at ten o'clock dismissed her, saying, "I shall now just go and look at my son before I retire, I expect he will have a bad night after this exciting day and the close night. You go to bed, Boriska, for you will have to be up early in the morning." The maid kissed her hand and went upstairs to her room. The Countess sat for a while in her dressing-gown, then got up and paced the room restlessly, "How my face burns!" she said. "Is it with the wind or——"

Excitedly she brushed her hair back over her shoulders and extinguished all the candles except one; this she took up, and went along the dark corridor that led to her son's rooms. A luxurious sitting-room separated the two bedrooms. She crossed the empty salon and softly entered her son's bedroom, sitting down beside him, and placing her hand on his forehead as she had so often done before. He slept soundly. As she left she heard a noise in the other bedroom. Georg was pacing restlessly up and down, sleepless as usual. She thought perhaps he was composing.

Suddenly he heard a soft knocking.

"Come in!" he called out in astonishment.

The door opened noiselessly; in the red half-light of his lamp he saw the woman he adored on the threshold of his room.

"Helene!" he exclaimed. "You! What has happened? Is Stephan ill?"

"Sh!" she whispered, a mysterious wonderful smile overspreading her features but vanishing quickly, "he is asleep. Don't let us waken him! Georg, I have come to you—I couldn't sleep to-night until I had seen you once more—God be merciful! I surrender——!"

. . . . . .

Late next morning, late as usual, for he lay awake half the night, Georg awoke from his dreams. He lay still now for another hour with eyes closed, thinking over the wonders of the past night, looking about him in the room where every article, every picture on the walls, the carpet that had borne her feet, the glass that had

moistened her fevered lips testified to the unexpected, the heavenly happiness that had dawned for him. As he lay there the unusual silence that prevailed in the castle struck him; Stephan usually came to him at this time, perhaps he had found him asleep and gone out; he missed Boriska's tuneful voice singing her folk-songs as she went about her work; and presently he rang for the servant.

On his breakfast tray was a letter. "From the Countess," the old man said in a queer voice. "They left early this morning, and Count Stephan, who did not know as he entered the carriage that they were going to Vienna, will be very much cut up and miss you, sir. They have gone to visit Countess Szilagyi, and I hope they will soon return."

Georg could not utter a word. As the old man left the room he gazed at the letter as if he knew every word it contained, then opened it slowly and read the few lines.

"I have gone with my son for a few weeks or months to my parents, to lighten for him that blow of parting from you which is now inevitable. We shall not return until I know that you have left the castle. Don't try to cross me in this, my absolute determination; but stay on until you have quite recovered or found another home. Believe me, this parting cannot be more painful to you than it is to me; I shall never forget what you have been to and done for my son. Fate is more powerful than our desires. Farewell! HELENE."

He sat down at once and wrote a long letter to Vienna, and waited, at first happily, and then restlessly, feverishly, and gloomily for a reply that never came. Suddenly he left without a word to anybody.

Summer and autumn had gone by and a severe winter had covered the vast Hungarian plain with snow when orders came from the Countess, who had been informed of the Candidate's departure long since, that two sleighs were to meet them at the nearest station.

They arrived that afternoon, and the Countess had seen her son, who had a slight cold, to his room and his bed, and was busy unpacking her personal belongings, when there came a knock at her door. She unlocked it, thinking her maid wished to speak to her, when a figure closely muffled and covered with snow burst in upon her.

"Good gracious!" she called out, "Georg! What does this mean?"

"Yes, it is I," he said. "Perhaps I have come at an awkward moment; but when one has waited months it's at last impossible to wait minutes."

She remained speechless. With one look she saw the state of his mind and her own awful position. "Georg!" she cried imperiously, "how dared you come to this house again—have you forgotten what you owe me, or rather—what you should owe your honour and the honour of a woman?"

"Honour?" he mumbled after her. "Excuse me if I can't see what you mean. I must sit down after three hours' tramp through the snow. Wonderful how beautiful you have grown, more beautiful than I remembered." He rambled on, sometimes addressing her and gazing at her, but mostly talking to himself.

"What do you want here?" she managed to say at last. Her voice trembled, and her large blue eyes were fixed intently on the man.

"What do I want here?" he answered in a far-off voice. "I am just here as you see. If you knew what I have suffered, what I am suffering now, no sleep, no work, only one longing, one single wish like that of a thirsty man in the desert. You must let me remain here, otherwise you are heartless, a monster. And I know you have a heart—and what a heart!"

"Must I? And as what must I let you remain here? And how long? Come, Georg, collect yourself, you are ill, tired, worn out; let me speak to you quietly, let me try to cure you. I have tried once already—yes—and failed miserably—and I call our good God to witness my deep humiliation and terrible suffering. This time I must be strong. You can't live here with me as my lover and as tutor to my boy, and to make you my husband is impossible. Think of it! I who have refused the highest in the land to give my hand to one Georg Lindner, a man of no position, of no name to be the master of this house! It is unthinkable, and would mean endless misery, endless shame. Dear friend," she continued hesitatingly, "in this hour I must be honest with you—I don't love you—I—have never loved you—it would go against my heart—against my nature to make the slightest response to your passion."

"Even if you want to be honest with *me*," he spoke softly now, "you are now dishonest with *yourself*. Think—I am neither beautiful nor noble, not even agreeable. What else can it be then, than that mysterious power—love—that has brought us together—a power that it would be foolish to resist. That night when you came to me you spoke differently—you spoke the truth then! Shall I repeat your words to you, not one of which I have forgotten?"

While he spoke she fought a violent battle, the struggle was visible in her face, intolerable pain convulsed her features; then they became still and hard.

"I deceived you," she said. "I have never loved you, and," hesitatingly and falteringly she added, "I know now that I could

not live with you. Compose yourself, Georg, think of me what you will, but tear your love for me from your heart, for it is not returned. And now go, and know that you have yourself to blame that we must part in this way! " Her voice failed her, and she had to turn from him to hide the tears that had welled up into her eyes.

As she turned again and looked at him, a terrible change had come over him. He had got up from the couch and stood by the table opposite her, his left hand clutching his throat, his right fingering the revolver that her aunt had pressed upon her before she started on her journey as a weapon against possible prowling wolves that penetrate deeply into the plains of Hungary in winter. " What is it? " she cried. " Calm yourself—wait—I will ring for some wine—you are worn out—your nerves——"

Quickly he interposed between her and the bell-rope. " Stop! " he cried, " I want nothing but the truth—nothing. There is only one truth—either you lied to me then or now! You have robbed me of my trust in you, I have lost my self-respect, I am done for —I have lost everything that makes life worth living, and I had better use this toy to put an end to all my sufferings before the little brain that is left to me deserts me."

" You are raving! " she cried, freeing her arm from his grasp with a violent wrench. " You forfeit the last shred of pity that I feel for you by making this scene; you must leave this house at once. Besides, I have consented to marry Count Alexander, and in three weeks' time the wedding will take place. I have found that a lonely woman must have some protector, and this behaviour of yours has confirmed me in my decision. Georg . . .! Dear God—Georg . . .! "

Boriska tore open the door just as two shots rang out. She saw the Countess sink to the floor and the Candidate stand staring down on her, blood streaming from his forehead. With a cry she rushed to her mistress and raised her up in her arms; the Countess opened her eyes, and, gazing at the unhappy man opposite to her, managed to utter a few disjointed words.

" You are—a fool! What have you—done now? About Count Alexander—did you think it was true? It's all right, Boriska—look how Herr Georg bleeds—I was playing with the revolver—the silly thing—but go, Georg, get yourself bound up. Forget what I said—they were white lies—nothing was true—forgive me—a thousand times—I loved you only too well—Boriska—a glass of water—my son——! "

She then closed her eyes and expired. The girl's cries for help were soon answered, and presently everybody in the castle was assembled. The young Count tottered into the room in his night-dress; but as he saw Georg, who still stood there as in a trance,

he rushed to him and threw himself on his neck. Only then Georg seemed to come to his senses, and, supporting his pupil, went with him to his rooms, where by the light of the lamp they spent the night.

Georg was taken to gaol next morning. At his examination he never uttered a word, and on the sixth day he was found dead in his cell, having refused to touch any food ever since his arrest.

Count Stephan survived his mother and friend for some years. At first he inquired now and again after them; but gradually his reason seemed to go, and finally only his playing of the violin was heard in the deserted castle, sounding like a death-dirge for lost life and lost love.

PAUL VON HEYSE

THE HUNTSMAN

On the western shore of the Königssee, opposite to the steep wall of the Watzmann, which descends precipitously into the deep, a wild footpath leads straight through the wood. The wood-cutters and hunters know it, the cow-girls climb on to the Alm by it, the deer run across it. Twice it passes through grassy wood-clearings where stand solitary Sennhütten, and blockhouses in which the wood-cutters spend the winter. The nearer it approaches the edge of the mountain, the fewer are the stems, until at length the ridge rises bare from out the firs and larches, and looks down freely into the beautiful valleys round about Berchtesgaden, into the dark lake at its feet, and on to the gay hunting-castle Bartholomä, encircled by lofty maples, which beckon to the wanderer from out this rocky wilderness.

In autumn, when it is the stag's rutting-time, a youth, accompanied by a young huntsman, ascended the steep path, and often looked down admiringly into the deep. He wore the customary hunter's dress, but it was evident the hand of a city tailor had tried his art on it. The fine cloth jacket was bound with green velvet; he wore a green waistcoat of quilted silk, chamois-leather breeches to the naked knees, green stockings, whose strings were fastened by gold buttons, mountain shoes that, in spite of the heavy nails, were as bright as possible, and were daintily fastened by yellow laces. On the brand-new pointed hunting-cap were a chamois beard and a blackcock feather; but these were fastened at the wrong place, which had long been troubling the boy of fifteen years, who bore beneath his coarse jacket the heart of an able and complete hunter, only he did not dare to tell the grand gentleman of it. He carried the beautiful double-barrelled gun meditatively after the young baron, and noticed with satisfaction that the sharp edges of the stones which seemed sown around left many a mark on the shining polish.

But we by no means wish to rouse any prejudice against the gentleman with his fine shoes. He was a tolerable hunter in the forests of his own estates, but unaccustomed to the mountain chase, and new to the customs of the country. The higher he mounted the more cheerfully he looked about him. The autumn air made

every sound from the lake distinctly audible: he heard the oars-women, who were going to Bartholomä, singing far below, the pistol-shots fired off opposite to the echoing wall, and the rolling roar of the echo; and, when silence reigned once more, the song of the titmice in the wood, and the murmur of the little brooks. He stood still, raised his hat, and looked attentively into the woods around.

"It is beautiful here in your country, Phrygius," said he to the boy, who bore into the romantic wood this classical name, bequeathed him by his ancestors, a long line of worthy school-masters.

"I should think so, sir," exclaimed the youth. "There are many chamois over there in Warteck, and higher up marmots, if your honour would like to shoot one once."

Here the conversation stopped; for Phrygius spoke the purest mountain dialect, and the baron, a Franconian, scarcely understood a word of it, and feared to forfeit respect by questions. His desire was for a mighty stag, that was to be found up on the Regenalm, and of which he had heard from the ranger. Phrygius knew its beat; and after spending the night in the Sennhütte, they meant to go out next day to stalk it. So he continued his way in silence.

They had been several hours on the road, when a strong daring-looking fellow came towards them from above, stood still suddenly, and examined them with an angry gaze. He could scarcely have been twenty-four years of age, wore a very faded old jacket, a weather-beaten little hat with a long cock's-feather; the strong bare knees showed their brownness as they looked out from the leather breeches and woollen socks, and his coarse shirt left neck and chest uncovered. He stood now leaning on his tall mountain stick in the middle of the way with almost sarcastic obstinacy, as though he were ruler here, and did not turn a step when the dandy stranger approached. The bold fellow pleased him. He looked confidingly at him, nodded, and said:

"God greet you! How far is it from here to the Regenalm?"

The youth's sharp-cut mouth fell, he bit his lips together as though he preferred to swallow the answer.

"To the Regenalm?" he repeated at length, with a scornful glance at the stranger's costume. "Do you suppose it is carnival up there?"

He raised his stick, and struck it against a stone, as if to test the power of the sharp iron point.

"Seppi," said the hunter-boy, "stand aside at once, or I will tell the ranger you know what!"

The other laughed.

"Talk what stuff you please," said he. "I fear no devil, least

of all such a creature as you, who carries the gun for such a monkey. God be with you, Phrygius! "

And with another laugh he struck aside among the firs, and disappeared in a hollow. The other two looked after him.

" Who is that rude fellow? " asked the baron.

" Seppi from Thiereck, your honour," answered the boy, staring down into the hollow, as if a wounded deer had escaped that way. " The ranger has had his eye on him for some time; for he poaches about dangerously, just as he feels inclined. Formerly, when his mother still lived, he kept quieter; now he carries on in broad daylight. Resei on the Regenalm is his sweetheart. That is why he pricked up his ears when your honour asked the way there. And another thing that did not please him was that you wear the blackcock feather in front instead of behind. When any of the people wear it so, it means he wants to pick a quarrel, and every one is ready to fall upon him. I will not answer for it that Seppi may not want to pick a quarrel with your honour, although he has gone out of your way now."

" What can he do to me? " said the young man calmly. " He has not even a gun."

" Oh, yes, he has, sir; only you did not see it. He has one to screw. He carries the butt end in his pouch, and the barrel, which is quite short, in his jacket pocket. When he wants to shoot, he can put it together in a second. But if the gamekeeper gets hold of him he must give it up, and then he will be locked up for several weeks."

" And what did you threaten to tell the ranger about him, Phrygius? "

" I saw him last Saturday with a chamois in the Ofenthal, just by the place where the king shoots. He was going down to the Hintersee. If his mother were not my godmother, I believe he would have shot me, he was so furious at my meeting him. I promised him to keep silence. But he has no peace in his conscience."

" Is he poor, that he must go poaching? "

" He might live quite comfortably if he did not gamble and act the grand gentleman at every kermess and shooting-match. But he thinks it must be so; and for that his box-making does not bring him in enough. His mother, who kept things together a bit, is no longer there; he has sold his cows, is in debt for his house. Where is he to get something from? Resei does not care about him any more either; I heard myself how she said to her friend that she would not take a good-for-nothing and poacher. That makes him twice as fierce and furious, and he would like to shoot down every one. But your honour need not be afraid. I will take care, with the gun behind you. In another hour we shall be at the huts."

After this conversation they were silent again, and the more persistently since the last steep bit of road required firm breath. When they passed out of the shade of the wood, and now looked up at the free green slopes of the last height, the baron again stood still, and fixed his eyes on a spot high up on the hill, where something dark was moving backwards and forwards before the clear sky. The boy told him that it was a seesaw, on which the cow-girls sometimes amused themselves. Continuing his way, he soon heard the shrill cry with which the quick-sighted girls welcomed him from a distance. But when he reached the top, had climbed the highest ridge, and approached the seesaw, he felt a cold shudder at the sight of this dangerous game. Hard by the steep precipice a stake of about a man's height had been driven into the ground, and over it lay the long board of the seesaw, and moved backwards and forwards. At each end, holding on to a short peg, sat one of the Sennerinnen astride, with her legs crossed. Up and down they flew, while the ends of their black head-dresses fluttered, and the ground shook when they struck on it with all their weight, to fly up next moment high over the precipice, into which the least swerve of the pole must have thrown them. As they hung in mid-air, nodding and laughing welcome to the strange hunter, and waving their hands high in the air, while their white teeth shone, the spectator forgot all his fear, and enjoyed the sight of the fresh youth that smiled on him here in the wilderness, like a bunch of Alpine roses on the steep rocky wall.

At last the two girls grew tired of their game, and stopped. In an instant they were off the swing, for Phrygius helped them, and greeted the new arrival kindly, who asked for their hospitality. Now for the first time, he was able to look around from the height on which he stood, and thought himself well repaid for his troublesome ascent. On the crest of the Watzmann fresh snow had fallen; the " Stony Sea " shone softly in the evening red, and the glittering ice-mantle of the Alm sparkled in it like a large diamond among the crown jewels of the vast Alpine domain. The Alm descended to the south in a gentle slope; here and there a large rocky fragment overgrown with Alpine roses looked out from the depth, or a thicket of dark-green dwarf-pines, between which the cows were grazing. Lower down towards the Regenalm firs and some larches reappeared.

The four wended their way in this direction, in such conversation as hunters, in coarse or fine shoes, generally carry on with Sennerinnen. The taller and handsomer of the girls was that Resei whom Phrygius had mentioned in connection with the poacher. The other, Genoveva, or Vefa, was inferior to her companion in beauty, but by no means in good humour. They both wore close-fitting bodices, and over them tight brown woollen jackets trimmed with red stripes and a number of coloured glass buttons. They had woollen socks from their ankle to the knee. Resei was barefooted,

and Vefa wore heavy wooden shoes. Both inhabited a large Sennhütte by the Regen, divided by a partition-wall into two equal parts, so that each of the girls had her own domain of dairy, cellar, hearth, and stable for the cattle. There they had already spent several weeks, and the time was approaching when they were to drive off with the well-fed herds back to the peasants who had entrusted them with their cattle.

All this they told the baron on the way from the seesaw to their hut. Meantime the twilight was beginning to envelop them, and it was growing cold on this exposed height. The " Stony Sea " shimmered grey, the snowy crest of the Watzmann stood out in spectral paleness in the colourless air, and beyond, from the invisible basin of the Obersee, a white mist rose slowly. Scarcely a quarter of an hour later, although moving with apparent slowness, it had covered the whole horizon, and hung like a tough spider's web even round the firs and dwarf-pines on the Alm, so that the hunters and girls reached the hut only just in time.

Within they already found a fire on the ground opposite the door. An old wood-cutter sat there cooking his evening meal in Resei's frying-pan. Two Sennerinnen and a cow-boy from the neighbouring Alm had also looked in to have an hour's chat.

There were rather close quarters round the blackened hearth, and the two little seats were not sufficient. Phrygius crouched down next the cow-boy on the threshold of the dairy; the baron had a warm seat between Vefa and one of the strange girls; Resei was going backwards and forwards, preparing in haste a real mountain *Schmarren* for her guests. But close quarters are no hindrance to cosiness. Soon laughing and giggling began in the merry circle. The tin spoons clattered; the baron did justice to a wooden bowl of sweet milk, into which Vefa threw large bits of bread. Phrygius smoked a cigar that the baron had given him with all a novice's satisfaction. The old wood-cutter, who at first had also been somewhat mistrustful of the stranger, became so cheerful from the effects of the hunting-flask out of which he was allowed to drink, that he began to turn out his endless store of ancient songs, accompanied by the monotonous music of an old zither; while the cow-girls often joined in, laughing and jogging each other's elbows.

The baron slung his gun across his shoulder, and stepped after Resei out into the morning mist. She wanted to show him his way as far as the beat which Phrygius had described to her. From the Regenalm a gentle beautifully-rounded slope descends between the mountain peaks to the west, until it sinks in steeper craggy cliffs into the lake. The ground is covered with soft grass, tolerably free from stones; a sparse copse of beautiful maples extends through the whole length of the hollow, which is called, after it,

the Maple Valley. Here the stag driven by Phrygius was to pass between the trees.

"Hunter's luck to you!" said the girl, as she stood still at the entrance to the Maple Valley.

He also stood still and looked back. There lay the huts peacefully in the first light of the rising sun, while it was only just dawn in the hollow. The cows had dispersed. Vefa's form could be distinguished on a piece of rock, and she sent a strong *jodel* cry across to them.

"That will not drive the game away," said Resei. "They are accustomed to it. Sometimes the stags come to us so trustfully that we could touch them. But then there must be no hunter near, or they would soon scent him."

She seemed to have something else on her mind, for she hesitated to go.

"Listen," said she at length. "It may be that Seppi will try to play a trick to spoil your hunt. He will scarcely dare do more. But if you meet him, do not speak an angry word to him, whatever he may do, or he will do what he might repent. And now, once more, hunter's luck to you!"

She left him standing, and again returned to her hut, and he gazed after her strong and yet graceful form. He did not fear Seppi, for he bore his protecting weapon, and knew himself to be quick and strong. Besides, in this late season the maple wood was scarcely dense enough for an ambush, nor did he fear one much from this very straightforward fellow. So he loaded his gun, and now began creeping cautiously among the stems to seek a convenient station. A young deer crossed his path, a few chamois hastened past in quick flight on the top of the ridge, and sent down stones into the valley. This showed him that his Phrygius must be approaching. But still the hero of the day—the stag—kept him waiting. The hunter could plainly distinguish his track on the dry leaves; and as he came to an open space which it crossed, he took up his station between two little fir trees, on whose roots lay a mossy stone. There he crouched down behind the stems, between which he could see and aim very well. All around him not a creature stirred, except the birds, who now and then buzzed out from the branches, and always made the watcher's heart beat faster, as though they proclaimed the approach of the expected stag.

Gradually, amid watching and listening, he sank into a pleasant day-dream. He planned out for himself how he would set to work this evening to please Resei. He laid his gun down beside him, and removed the traces of his hay bed from his clothing. Meantime the sun was slowly rising behind the ridge, and pouring a full light into the Maple Valley. The hunter wore a ruby on his finger; he let it play in the sun, and felt, as he looked at his image in the

bright blade of his new hunting-knife, that he was completely irresistible, the handsomest, most distinguished, and richest man for many miles around. How could he fail in anything?

Just as he had finished his toilette, he heard a rustling of dead branches close by, and saw the stag breaking forth on a side to which the track had not pointed. He was not running, but looking round wildly—a strong royal stag, quite black, with shaggy breast, and spreading sharp-pointed branches. One moment he stood in the clearing, scenting, with head erect, and emitting a low murmuring noise. The next moment he became aware of the man behind the fir; his black eye gave the hunter one hasty glance, then he turned round with a mighty spring, and stormed into the wood up the slope. But behind him sounded two reports one after another, and the certain tokens of a hasty flight showed the startled hunter that he had had more luck than prudence, and had certainly hit the animal. Eagerly he sprang up, and rushed after the fugitive into the forest, intent now only on discovering the stag's blood. With strong steps he followed in that direction, and a cry of joy escaped from him when he perceived on a piece of bare rock the red track, although it was almost immediately after lost among grass and tall ferns. He stood still for one moment and considered whether he should wait for Phrygius. But after his contemptible beginning, he felt the desire doubly strong to seek the stag alone, whom he expected to find dead. So he carefully reloaded both barrels of his gun, and continued to climb the difficult path between cliffs, bushes, and underwood, from time to time encouraged by meeting the bloody track.

He had soon climbed so far up the mountain that he could look down on to the trees in the Maple Valley, and see along the whole length of the hollow. Two or three times he thought he saw his hunting-boy's grey jacket appear between the branches; and now he also head a whistle, but farther in the distance. Without letting himself be detained, he climbed on along the wild slope, up which the wounded stag had hurried, following the track which shone plainly in bright red drops on the grey rock, and the perspiration stood on his forehead from the difficult pursuit. For still the warm south wind was blowing up from the valley, which, even had the sun not been rising higher in the heavens, would have increased a wanderer's difficulties. Now he had climbed the ridge of the mountains, and the view opened out on to the blue lake below and the walls of the giant Watzmann. But close by the huntsman's feet lay another craggy wilderness of immense blocks, here and there overgrown with Alpine roses. A novice could not be blamed for stopping here to take breath and consider what he should do next. Now he did repent that he had not first waited for his able hunting companion. He listened to hear whether he

might not have climbed after him of his own accord; and in truth he fancied he heard, at no great distance, the sound of nailed boots on the hard rock.

"Phrygius!" he called three times. Not a sound in answer. But should he turn back now, while there in the bright sun lay the red track, whose drops were getting bigger and bigger? "Forward!" exclaimed he, with determination, and again began to pursue the uncertain zigzag course of the fugitive over the loose stones that rolled beneath his steps fast and noisily down into the abyss.

Suddenly he saw a mighty vulture flying from the lake, shooting through the steel-blue air. Now it stopped just above the cliff, its glance firmly fixed on one spot. There could be no doubt, there, only fifty paces from the baron, behind the sheltering rock that rose sheer from among the stones, the stag had stopped, and was perhaps already dead. While the huntsman rejoiced in the auspicious omen, its motionless hovering roused him to attempt a new aim. The barrel of his gun was loaded with a bullet. But the bird was as still as the black spot in the target, and, if the one ball failed, there still remained the other for the stag. He calmly took aim, shot, and with convulsive wings the vulture fell out of the air. At the same moment the mighty head of the stag rose from behind the rock, and the wounded creature stood opposite its enemy, in the wild mountain solitude, prepared for a last struggle. He felt his heart beating. Next him he saw the precipice, where there was no escape either up or down. He knew by the animal's proud bearing that the shot had only wounded its thigh, but had not reached the seat of life. The savage creature had already bent its antlers for the attack; everything depended on one last bullet; but with cool hand the hunter raised the gun to his cheek, aimed just as the stag was storming against him, and would have been sure of his shot, when his gun treacherously failed him, and only the cap went off. A sudden shudder overcame the defenceless man. He saw the raging beast springing towards him, and had only sufficient consciousness to commend his soul to God and throw himself down, so that the enemy might possibly rush over him, when—hark!—behind him sounded a shot; and when he started up and looked round he saw, twenty paces from him, the falling stag, who struck down the low dwarf pines, and in his death struggle threw down sand and stones into the abyss with the points of his antlers.

Instantly the baron sprang to his feet saved, and turned towards the ridge of the mountain, whence help in need had come. "Phrygius!" exclaimed he, for his eyes were dazzled, and he did not immediately recognise the form that stood calmly among the crags. Now it moved. The marksman opposite threw the discharged blunderbuss over his shoulder and turned round, slowly

reascending the height. Not till then did the baron see that it was no other than Seppi from Thiereck. But before he could realise how it had all come about, his suspicious deliverer had disappeared on the other side of the ridge, and he was left alone with the dead stag.

A quarter of an hour later, when Phrygius came breathlessly to the spot, he found the baron plunged in reverie and mentally exhausted, sitting on a stone and staring into the animal's breast-wound, so that he at first thought the gentleman must be asleep with his eyes open. He had to call him several times before he stirred.

"I am glad," said the honest fellow, "that your honour has all your limbs left you. For I heard Seppi's shot, that sounds different from your twin barrels. I turned hot all over; for I know well enough that when Seppi is in a passion, he could aim at the Lord himself; and directly after, when I met him there where the trees begin, he looked at me so strangely, that I could say nothing to him but "Seppi, have you seen the baron?" Then he pointed back over the ridge with his hand, and said, 'He has shot a stag and a vulture.' And with that he went his way. But, sir, it is a glorious stag, and a beautiful shot. And where is the vulture?"

The baron pointed to the rock, from which Phrygius soon brought the stately bird. He tied it on to the gun, threw it across his back and said:

"We will fetch the stag this afternoon; he will never get up any more. But what was that about Seppi, sir? What did he shoot at? And how is it that I only heard you shoot once up here?"

"I will tell you some other time," said the hunter, rising. "Where is Seppi gone?"

"I cannot tell. No one knows his ways."

FERDINAND VON SAAR

1833–1906

THE TOILERS OF THE ROCKS

I

One of the most remarkable railways in the world is that which crosses the Semmering—a ridge belonging to the Noric Alps which marks the frontier between Austria and Styria the Green.

The traveller who makes this journey for the first time receives a deep and lasting impression. In truth, what can be more terrible, more striking, than the narrow track running at infinite heights between beetling walls and yawning precipices?—what more impressive than the carriages rolling with a crash like thunder over viaducts elevated to fabulous heights, or burying themselves to the shrill scream of the locomotive in the deep night of the long tunnels?

The air is cold—freezing. The train is swept along as by a whirlwind. The earth below is so far away that it can hardly be distinguished through the half-transparent mists. In the midst of scenes and works of such sublimity man realises his own insignificance. But little thought is given to the thousands of poor people who, amidst the greatest dangers, have spent their strength in hauling the enormous rocks and blocks of stone, in spanning the gigantic gulfs with bridges, and in bringing their titanic task to a successful issue.

It is the story of two of these poor creatures that I propose to tell. Not that my intention is to excite the public pity for their fate, or to idealise their lives. I shall simply strive to shed a little light upon the immense mass of the suffering poor who, after a life of struggle, of privations, and of rude labour, sink, despised and unremembered, into the common tomb. I shall speak of the human heart, of its joys and its sorrows, and of the great tragedy of life which is renewed for ever amongst the humblest as among the most powerful of the earth.

The Semmering railway was almost finished. The hubbub of the labourers, the thunder of the blasting had ceased. The swarm of workpeople who had come from Bohemia, from Moravia, from

sterile Karst and fertile Frioul, had dispersed, and had pushed on farther south in search of work.

Reassured by the tranquillity of the place, the wild animals began to come forth again from the depths of the forest. Only here and there were still seen some of the little wooden huts which the wandering labourers had inhabited, most of which they had pulled down before they left.

These scattered cabins served as a shelter to a small number of workers who still remained to finish the railway; for still, at certain places, rails had to be fixed, telegraph poles to be placed, and the pointsmen's boxes to be completed, under the roofs of which the swallows had already made their nests.

One Sunday afternoon a woman was sitting upon the threshold of one of these little huts, which stood against the rock, near the line. Her hair was hidden by a coarse scarf twisted round it; her face was worn and old-looking, and contrasted with her girlish figure. Deep lines crossed her forehead, and drew down with a mournful expression the corners of her lips.

The sun was sinking at the horizon. Great shadows already wrapped the highest summits, but a flood of living light bathed the valley and the forest pines. A cloud of flies, of butterflies and bees, whirled dizzily in the sunlight. The solitary girl saw nothing of this charming landscape. Her eyes were fixed upon a man's shabby jacket which she was darning. This work appeared to be particularly difficult to her, for if the coarse and horny hand that awkwardly held the needle was examined, it was easy to see that it was accustomed to handle the hoe and spade.

Suddenly the young woman's attention was attracted by the sound of footsteps. She lifted her head, and perceived a man of miserable aspect advancing towards the cabin.

He was slight and insignificant in figure, and was clothed in an old military coat with flapping skirts, too loose and too long for him. A soldier's cap, blue and greasy, was pulled down over his forehead to his eyes. He staggered as he walked, though to sustain himself he leant upon a knotty stick, and though the little sack which he carried slung across his back appeared almost empty. He approached timidly, and looked helplessly at the young girl out of his weak eyes.

"Is this hut Number 7?" he asked in a faltering tone.

"Yes, this is it," she replied with the harsh accent peculiar to the Germans of Central Bohemia. "What do you want?"

"I have been sent here to work." And as he spoke he showed her a paper which he held in his hand.

The young girl scrutinised the strange costume of her questioner and his thin white face with its straggling beard.

"The overseer is not here at present," she said at last. "He has

gone down to the tavern at Schottwein with the men. Rest yourself whilst you wait, if you are tired." She cast a last glance upon the poor creature, who appeared to be in suffering, and then returned to her interrupted work, drawing the needle with renewed haste.

The soldier did not reply. He dragged himself a little farther away, and let himself fall upon the grass with a great sigh of weariness. He lay there at full length, whilst the sun sank more and more at the horizon, pouring over the whole scene its liquid golden light. A deep silence reigned. Far above in the azure sky a solitary vulture wheeled, uttering its piercing cry. Very soon from the distance came the bellowing of drunken voices. The girl trembled.

" Heavens! " she murmured, speaking to herself. " They are already returning, and the jacket is not done! "

The voices became more and more distinct, the howlings stronger, and in a few minutes a band of individuals of savage aspect burst upon the scene. In the midst of them, and rather better clothed than his companions, a man of herculean figure caught the eye. He was about fifty years of age. His big face was red and swollen by drink, and from under his straw hat, which was tilted backwards on his head, escaped a tangled mass of greyish hair. On his left shoulder was slung his coat, which he had taken off; his right arm, with its powerful muscles displayed by the turned-up sleeve, carried a great pannier filled with provisions. Two of his companions were loaded with heavy sacks full of potatoes, which were hoisted on their shoulders.

" Halloa, Tertschka! " cried the man with the basket in a hoarse voice; " give us a light, so that we can put our provisions in the cellar."

As she stood before him his eye fell upon the unfinished jacket, which she held timidly against her breast.

" Well, is it done? " he asked abruptly.

" Not quite," she replied, in some confusion.

" What, not done yet? " he cried, so fiercely that his face grew purple. " Did I not tell you that I should want it to-morrow? "

" I have worked at it all the afternoon. But I cannot darn it as quickly as some one who has learnt to sew."

The reproach contained in these plaintive words appeared to increase his irritation.

" You have always an answer ready," he cried. " But if at daybreak to-morrow my jacket is not finished, take care of yourself! "

He put down his basket of provisions and strode towards her, menacing her with a terrible gesture. She shrank back from the blow, and at that moment he caught sight of the man in the soldier's coat, who had timidly drawn near.

" Who is this? " he demanded, letting his hand fall.

" He has been sent here to work," replied Tertschka breathlessly.

The overseer, for it was he, drew himself up to his full height and advanced towards the wretched little creature, measuring him from head to foot.

" Bah! to work! The rascal cannot even stand upon his legs."

" I have come a long journey," said the stranger, hesitating. " I have walked here from Otterthal."

" That is a feat, no doubt, sneered the overseer, scanning in the twilight the paper which the young man held out with a shaking hand. " You are called Huber? " he asked, after a pause.

" Yes, George Huber."

" And why do you wear a soldier's uniform? "

" I have been in the army and have been discharged."

" What, you have been in the army? "

" Seven years in the 12th Regiment. I have been dismissed now because I cannot get rid of a bad fever which I caught during the siege of Venice."

" Good Heavens! Fever! This is the last straw! The devil must be in the Government that sends us such fellows. We get nothing but invalids to make stone-breakers of. And then people are astonished that no work is done. As for you," he added, with another threatening gesture, " take care, for if you fail to do your two cart-loads of gravel daily, I shall send you packing. This is not a hospital, remember! "

Thereupon he picked up his basket and, followed by his companions, entered the cabin. Tertschka led the way, holding in her hand a brand lighted at the fire. A door barred with iron led into a sort of grotto hollowed in the rock, in which the provisions were stored. The overseer then retired to rest in an adjacent room; upon which the labourers stretched themselves, yawning, here and there upon the floor, and without troubling themselves about their new comrade, prepared to sleep upon the old straw mattresses which were ranged against the walls.

George all this time stood irresolute by the door. In a few minutes Tertschka came towards him.

" You can sleep there," she said, pointing with her hand to a vacant place.

He obeyed her awkwardly, screwing himself together so as to take up as little space as possible. After making a pillow of his sack and covering himself with his old coat, which he had taken off, he uttered a great sigh of weariness and composed himself to sleep. Tertschka lighted a little lamp and, crouching down by the fire, began to sew with feverish haste. When she had finished her work she extinguished the smoky flame, and stretched herself, dressed as she was, in a corner near the chimney.

Outside the night was blue and balmy—a summer's night in all its splendour. A cool wind blew. From the interior of the hut, whence could be heard the deep breathing of the sleepers, myriads of stars sparkled through the disjointed planks and crannies of the roof.

II

The dawn was already beginning to whiten the horizon when George awoke from his deep sleep. He watched the workmen quit their meagre couches, rise and pass out, furnishing themselves as they did so with all sorts of tools which were hanging on the walls of the cabin. He followed their example, and, after putting on his coat, stood hesitating in what direction to proceed in search of his work, when Tertschka came up to him, carrying on her shoulder a long-handled hammer.

" The overseer is still asleep," she said, " but I know what you have to do. Take this hammer and come with me."

He obeyed her, and they went out together.

Outside all was cool and peaceful. Only now and then a bird twittered in the bushes. The grass was heavy with clear dew.

They walked silently along. After some distance they came upon a stone quarry, where several of the men were at work, whilst the rest were busy upon the line, with wheelbarrows and spades. Tertschka, followed by George, passed these groups and paused at a heap of stones.

" This is my place," she said, seating herself on the middle of a pile of stones. " I never care to remain near the men. They are coarse and wicked; but if you like, you can work here."

He made no reply, but sat down at her side.

" See, these great fragments of rock must be broken into tiny pieces. There," she added, pointing to a great heap of fine gravel, " is my last week's work."

He took a piece of limestone, and struck it with his hammer, but the stone remained unbroken.

" Strike harder," cried Tertschka. This time she struck it in her turn, and the rock flew into fragments. He watched her in amazement, and after making a second attempt was rewarded with success. Then, without saying a word, both devoted themselves to their task.

All around them lay stretched a wild but charming scene of hill and valley. But the workpeople did not pause in their labour to admire its beauties. With stooping shoulders they struck and broke their stones, whilst the sun, now mounting in the heavens, beat down with scorching heat upon their unsheltered heads. The strokes of George's hammer became fainter and fainter, and at last the tool fell from his hand. He began to fan himself with his

cap, and to dry the moisture which streamed down his face. Tertschka stopped also.

"Are you tired already?" she asked, surveying him compassionately.

"Ah! Heaven only knows how tired," he replied in a dreary voice. "It is only now that I begin to feel how low the fever has brought me."

"Feeble and ill as you are, how could you accept work so hard and rude as ours?"

"What else remained for me to do? To beg? Not that, at any rate. I had learnt no trade. In my nineteenth year I was placed in the army. Now I am ill, they send me here to break stones. Yes, now I am a stone-breaker," he said, with a smile frightful in its bitterness. He picked up his hammer.

Tertschka stood silent with drooping head.

"But you will never be able to stand it," she said at last in a low voice.

"Oh yes, perhaps, when I get food to eat; these last days have been very hard for me. I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning."

She made no reply, but slowly unwrapped and took out of her apron a piece of black bread, which she broke into two parts. She held out to him the larger of the two pieces.

"Eat," she said.

He glanced timidly at the piece she offered him.

"But—it is your bread," he replied in confusion. And he made a gesture of refusal.

"That does not matter. I have quite enough for myself."

As he made no movement to accept it, she placed the bread by his side.

"You must be thirsty also," she continued. "I will go and fetch you some water; there is a stream hard by."

She rose, took a small pitcher fixed among a heap of stones, and ascended the quarry towards the pine forest, where a tiny rill of limpid water trickled between tufts of green moss. She filled the pitcher and drank, and then filled it again, and returned with it. The piece of bread was still untouched.

He accepted the cool draught with gratitude.

"Thank you very much—very much," he said in a broken voice when he had finished drinking.

"It was done willingly; there is nothing to thank me for."

She sat down again.

"Eat," she continued in a tone of sweet persuasion. "You can surely accept that of me."

The blood rushed to his face, and he took up the bread.

"Surely you, who are so kind-hearted, must also have been

unhappy," he said, without looking at her, and breaking off a piece of bread.

"Yes, I know what it is to be unhappy; and I am often hungry myself."

A lump rose in his throat, and he felt as if he were choking.

"Is this work so badly paid then?" he asked, after a pause.

"I do not get paid at all."

"What—you receive no wages?"

"No; the overseer takes charge of them."

"The overseer?"

"He is my stepfather."

"Your stepfather?" he repeated mechanically.

"Yes; my father was killed when I was quite little. Then my mother married the overseer, who at that time was simply a labourer. We all came hither from Bohemia."

"Then you are a native of Bohemia? and that is why you speak such a strange dialect, and why you have such a singular name? Tert——I cannot pronounce it."

"Tertschka," she repeated. "In German it is the same as Theresa; for short I am called Resi."

"But," he continued, "if the overseer receives your wages, it is his duty to maintain you."

"Oh, he gives me just enough to keep me from starvation. He is a bad man. He beats me continually. You saw him, how he threatened me yesterday about his jacket?"

She paused, plunged in mournful remembrances.

"But if he ill-treats you like that, why do you stay here?"

"I know that he would never let me go," she replied. "Some poor, defenceless being is always necessary to him, to torment with impunity. For he is a coward, though always ready to quarrel. And then, where should I go?" she continued with a sigh. "Everywhere life is sad. Everywhere there is suffering."

So saying, she picked up her hammer, and George, feeling a little more revived, followed her example. Silently they returned to their work.

The hours rolled on; the heat of noon spread into the valley and upon the mountain. All was quiet, except for the regular heavy strokes of the hammers and the tapping of the woodpecker in the branches. From time to time the hoarse voices of the men occupied on the line were heard, bursting into some brief refrain.

Suddenly the shrill tinkle of a bell rang out.

"What is that?" asked George, seeing the workpeople leaving their work and proceeding in the direction of the cabin.

"It is the dinner-bell," replied Tertschka. "Come, let us go."

He rose and followed her in silence. After finishing their meagre

meal they returned together to the quarry, where they continued their hard toil until night fell.

III

Thus days followed days, and they worked together side by side. George began to pick up his strength with amazing rapidity. The wretchedness in which he had hitherto lived was overcome. The vivifying mountain air swept away the fever which was consuming him. Already he handled his hammer with real vigour, whilst at the same time recounting to his companion the perils and adventures of his military life. There were many things which Tertschka only understood intuitively—others not at all. They were all so alien to her monotonous life, passed amidst the solitude of the great mountains. One thing she seized clearly, and that was that George had suffered. She began to tell him in return her own sad life and all its unhappiness. These long days of toil, passed side by side under the high scorching sun, became very sweet to them both. They started each morning at daybreak to the quarry, and when the bell rang at meal-time they were loth to be torn from their solitude and pleasant companionship, to endure the coarse jests and savage humour of the other occupants of the hut.

But, alas! these days, when mutual friendship was beginning to heal their wounds, and to soothe their poor bruised hearts, were not to last.

Whether the overseer had been informed of their intimacy by some vindictive companion, or his own evil nature made him divine the pleasure they took in each other's society, they never knew. But suddenly one day they perceived him standing behind them.

"What are you always doing here together, like two toads?" he bellowed. "Begone to your proper place, you famished scarecrow," he cried, turning to George, and pointing to another part of the quarry.

"As for you, you hypocrite," he continued to Tertschka, whilst George crept silently away, "I should like to know what plots you are contriving with that wretched dwarf. Listen: if I see you speaking to him again I will kick the vagabond out of the place, and that day will be your last; you understand?"

Thus were the two poor creatures brutally separated.

On the following day George received an order to work farther away, near the line. It was only at meal-times, or in the evening after the sun had set, that they saw each other; and then they dared not give a glance of recognition. Harder still, they could not speak a single word, for the overseer's eye was ever on them, and they were under the constant surveillance of their companions, who watched them with mocking smiles.

It was Saturday evening, and the overseer, accompanied by some

of the labourers, had gone to the tavern. Those who remained sat down to a game of cards, and soon became absorbed in handling the greasy pack. Presently they began to quarrel. Now was his time. George stepped softly over to Tertschka. The young girl was sitting in a corner on an old box, lost in thought.

" Why has he separated us like this? " he asked. " Surely it cannot matter to him if we sit together, as long as we do our work? "

She looked straight before her with a mournful expression.

" He is a wicked man," she said at last. " He cannot bear to see any one happy. He would like to deprive every one of every pleasure."

She rose and, lifting up the lid of the box, began to take out some articles of clothing.

" What are you going to do? " George asked, watching her.

" I have a great desire to go to-morrow to the church at Schottwein. There is no doubt I shall have great difficulty in obtaining permission from him. But let him say what he likes, I must not forget my religion in the midst of creatures who do nothing but drink and gamble."

George stood musing, with bowed head.

" It is a very long time since I went to church also," he said. " How delightful it would be if I could come with you."

" But it is impossible."

" Why? The overseer will know nothing. Let us each start separately and meet afterwards."

She reflected for an instant.

" It might be managed. In that case you must start before I do. Listen! On issuing from this cabin, there is a little pathway to the right which leads into the valley, and at the bottom of the path a wooden cross. Wait for me there. Now go," she added in an imploring voice, " or we shall be observed."

George went back and threw himself upon his couch, whilst the players roared and squabbled over their cards. He felt quite light-hearted and joyous in thinking of the morrow, and, absorbed in pleasant anticipations, he soon fell asleep.

The next day was magnificent. A bright sun glittered through the pine trees as George descended the narrow green path that Tertschka had pointed out to him. He peered about for the cross which he was to find at the entrance to the valley. Soon he caught sight of its brown, worm-eaten wood among the young beech leaves. As he was there in good time, he sat down upon a large, mossy stone which served as a *prie-dieu*.

A deep silence reigned; the stillness of a Sabbath day. Even the bees, which were plundering the many-coloured petals of the flowers, seemed to restrain their drowsy hum. The moss was starred with blue gentians. At length he started up impatiently and

began to walk up and down. He gathered some of the gentians, and also some white and some yellow flowers which gleamed amid the grass.

"I will give them to Tertschka," he murmured, casting a complacent glance at his improvised bouquet.

At last he caught the gleam of a light dress upon the hill. Some seconds after he saw Tertschka descending the pathway. He hastened to meet her. "Here I am," she said, out of breath. "I have been able to get away this time without hindrance."

George stood gazing at her.

Her head was bare; the scarf which she habitually wore was gone, and her thick hair was parted simply on her forehead. A crimson kerchief which she wore around her neck cast a soft flush upon her pale cheeks, and her sober-coloured bodice, though too large for her, and her striped petticoat of muslin, were not unbecoming.

"How pretty you look!" he said at last.

She cast down her eyes and blushed.

"Take these flowers," George continued. "I plucked them whilst I was waiting for you."

She took the bouquet, which he had until then held behind his back, and tried to fasten it in her bodice, but it was too large, and so she continued to hold it in her hand, together with her rosary. They went on together down the mossy path and on through the cornfields, where the newly-reaped wheat stood in great sheaves of burnished gold.

At length they reached the hamlet of Schottwein. They found it in a state of great animation. It was Mass day; the long, wide street which composed the village was thronged with all sorts of vehicles and with peasants clothed in their holiday garb. Opposite the church stalls were standing, crammed with every kind of goods for sale in rich variety—shawls of gay colours, cotton handkerchiefs, pipes, knives, glass bead necklaces, imitation coral ornaments were piled side by side with cooking utensils, gingerbread, and children's toys.

They paused in ecstasy before the grandeur of the sight. George longed for a pipe. He used to smoke when a soldier. Now that he gained a living, and neither drank nor gambled with his comrades, he could well afford the luxury. He asked Tertschka's advice, and she encouraged him to buy one. Whilst he made his purchase Tertschka strolled on in advance.

George elbowed his way through the crowd of loafers who pressed around the stall, and bought a pretty porcelain pipe embellished with tassels and a silken cord.

A brilliant necklace of amber beads caught his fancy. He imagined how pretty it would look on Tertschka's neck. The stall-

keeper asking him but a moderate sum, it was soon wrapped in paper and in his pocket. And next, out of the change of the florin which he had given in payment, George bought at a neighbouring stall a gingerbread cake in the shape of a heart. He finally purchased some tobacco, and hastened on to join Tertschka.

He began by showing her the pipe, which she admired exceedingly.

"This is for you," he added, holding out the gingerbread heart. The heart was stamped in the centre with another heart, red, thrust with an arrow, and encircled with a garland of flowers.

She slipped it with a pleased smile of gratification between her bouquet and her rosary.

"I have something else for you," he continued presently, drawing the little packet slowly from his pocket, half opening it, and letting her see the gleaming of the yellow beads. She cast a rapid glance upon it.

"How could you spend so much money on me?" she cried. But her face was all rosy with pleasure, and her eyes sparkled with innocent joy.

"If I could only give you all that I desire!" he replied with emotion. "But put it on and see how it looks."

She gave him her things to hold whilst she put on the necklace. But she could not succeed in fastening it.

"Let me do it," said George, and lifting gently the heavy masses of hair which clustered on her neck, he brought the two little ends of the snap together.

"There!" he said, examining her with a look of satisfaction.

They continued their route and soon came in sight of the little chapel standing in a cluster of lime trees.

Tertschka knelt down in the last row of benches, and placed her flowers and gingerbread before her. George stood erect behind her. He was much affected by that scene, so calm, so still. A mellow light streamed down through the lofty arched windows. But he could not pray. His eyes were fixed constantly upon that kneeling figure with bowed head and murmuring lips before him.

The Mass ended. The priest blessed the congregation as they passed out, but still she knelt. At length she rose, and, followed by George, advanced to the door where the impatient verger was shaking his bunch of keys. Outside the sun was glittering through the green foliage.

"Come," said Tertschka, "let us go and sit down."

They proceeded towards a forest of young pine trees which fringed the meadows. A little hill, carpeted with soft moss, provided them with a seat, from which they looked down upon the village inn at their feet. They gazed with interest. The little inn was *en fête*. A merry wedding party were celebrating their happi-

ness before the entrance, under a great beech tree, which spread its branches above their heads. Strains of music, softened by the distance, presently stole upon their ears. They saw the bridal pair advance and begin dancing upon the greensward to the music.

" How gaily they dance," cried Tertschka. " Do look at them."

" Yes, they are happy," he replied dreamily. " If only we could celebrate our marriage too! "

" Oh! what are you saying? " she murmured almost inaudibly; and, stooping down, she plucked a red flower in the grass at her feet.

" Resi! " he whispered—he called her by this name for the first time—and at the same moment he passed his arm timidly about the young girl's waist. " Resi, if you knew how much I love you! "

She made no answer, but she raised her eyes and fixed them upon his. In the lovelight of their depths he read his happiness. He drew her gently to his heart, and their lips met for the first time in one long kiss of love.

IV

Since I have undertaken the task of narrating this simple story as faithfully as possible, must I describe to you the dream of happiness in which our lovers lived from that day? I think it will be wise for me to pass it by in silence. What words can render the exquisite joys of a passion so pure as theirs?

It is true that they were compelled to conceal their happiness from all eyes, trembling with fear lest it should be discovered, as if they had been guilty of a crime. But in their secret hearts their passion throve and flourished.

The fear that the overseer should learn of their visit to Schottwein diminished little by little, so much so that one day George, having gone to that part of the quarry where Tertschka was working, took the opportunity to snatch a few minutes by her side. For a little while the lovers forgot their woes in a passionate embrace, but almost at the same moment they heard the sound of rapid steps behind them. They started instantly apart and perceived the overseer, who, with an evil smile upon his lips and his face purple with rage, stood gazing at them.

" Ha! so I have caught you this time, you wretched creatures! " he hissed forth. " This is the way you obey my orders! And you think I do not see your little game! I know well that you were together last Sunday, but I wanted to surprise you in the act. You shall pay for this." As he spoke he seized George by the throat, and, with a savage shake, threw him with such force upon the ground that the dust and stones flew up around him.

" Take away your load of stones, you gallows-bird! then pack, and be off. If ever I catch you prowling about here again I will break every bone in your body! "

He kicked the poor fellow as he raised himself painfully, then following him to his cart, he drove him to the road with blows. Then he came back and glared at Tertschka with a ferocious glance of hatred. " As for you," he said, " we will settle our account by and by."

Muttering and growling to himself, he strode away.

Stunned and blinded by the shock, George had rejoined his comrades. He emptied his cart mechanically, and sitting down upon a stone, gazed before him with thoughts far away. Since the morning the day had become dull and the sky covered with clouds. A biting autumn wind whistled in the tops of the pine trees. Suddenly the rain came down. But George never felt the icy drops which beat upon his face. Sparks danced before his eyes, and a shiver ran through his frame. Shame at the treatment he had undergone, mixed with the burning injustice which Tertschka, as well as himself, was enduring, brought the angry blood to his face. And now he was dismissed—separated from Tertschka—from that which was to him the most precious thing in all the world. The more he reflected the more his shame and rage increased. His timid and patient nature was stung to revolt, and he felt within him a new-born strength to struggle, to resist, to conquer any obstacles which should rise to separate him from his betrothed. Gradually his dejected countenance assumed a terrible expression, and his eyes shone with a strange lustre.

He rose and took his way towards the little hill where Tertschka worked. His companions eyed him curiously. He found Tertschka sitting on the ground in tears.

" Do not weep, Resi," he said. His voice was calm and gentle, but singularly grave.

She made no reply. He came to her side, and raised her head. Her sobs grew more violent.

" Do not weep," he repeated. " It was all for the best; we now know what we have to do."

She looked straight before her.

" You will come with me when I go away? "

She shook her head slowly.

" I shall try to obtain the post of crossing-keeper, which is given, I believe, to soldiers who have served during the war. You shall be my wife, and we will live in one of the little cottages beside the line. And if I fail in that," he added quickly, seeing that she made no sign of consent, and that her sobs redoubled—" If I cannot obtain this post we will work for years with all our strength, and economise as much as possible. But, Resi, speak—tell me that you consent! Answer me! "

" Alas! " she moaned, " all that you say is Paradise, but you are not thinking of the overseer. He will never let me go."

" He cannot prevent you. You are no longer a child. He has no hold upon you, none. You are a worker like ourselves. You are free to come and go at your pleasure."

" Believe me, he will not let me go, and, above all, with you. I have never told you," she replied, after a pause, whilst a crimson flush of anger dyed her face, " but he killed my mother with his cruelty. I told him at the time what I thought of him. Ever since that day he has hated me like poison, and never loses an opportunity to revenge himself upon me."

George grew pale to the lips. He seemed as if he were choking.

" The scoundrel! " he cried. " At any cost you must come with me, and we shall see if he will prevent you from going."

" Be careful," she cried in alarm. " He is quite capable of killing any being too feeble to defend itself."

" I do not fear him," said George, his small stature dilating. " He took me at a disadvantage before, but now let him come! "

" Madonna! " she moaned, wringing her hands in agony. " You must not fight! I cannot bear it."

" No, no, it will not come to that," he replied, striving to appear calm. " First of all we will tell him our decision, and you will see that he will say nothing. Coward that he is, he will be forced to acknowledge that he has no hold upon you, and that you are free. Take courage, Resi," he added gravely. " Would you let me go away alone? " For answer she sprang towards him, and clung tightly around his neck.

" Now we will go and find him," he said, stroking her hair gently.

They went slowly towards the cabin, Tertschka in a tumult of alarm, George dignified and perfectly calm. When they reached the cabin, they found the overseer, knife in hand, seated before the table, peeling potatoes. He started on perceiving the two young people, but his surprise soon changed into a sort of frenzy.

" What do you want here? " he cried, half rising, and gripping nervously the handle of his knife.

" You have dismissed me," replied George with a calm voice, " so I have come to get my things, and to tell you that Tertschka will go away with me."

The overseer made a movement as if about to spring upon them. Then, seeing George's determined attitude, he recoiled in alarm.

" I have nothing to reply to you," he said at last through his clenched teeth.

" That is not necessary. Tertschka is of age, consequently she is free to do as she pleases." The overseer burst into a hiss of fury.

" Take what belongs to you, Resi," George continued, taking down his own coat which hung on the wall, " and let us go."

The overseer gasped painfully for breath. A struggle was passing within him. He hardly knew what to do next. As he hesitated he threw a sidelong glance at Tertschka, who, unfortunately, could not control her agitation. As she walked towards her box he sprang upon her, and, grasping her by the shoulders, pushed her into the cellar, the door of which was half open, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket. "That is my answer," he bellowed with such fury that his whole body trembled. Then, gulping down his rage, he returned to his seat, and renewed his occupation.

This scene had passed so rapidly, and in a manner so unexpected, that George could do nothing to prevent it. Without any undue haste he buckled on his knapsack and approached the overseer slowly. "Let Tertschka out!" he said in a firm voice.

The overseer went on peeling his potatoes.

"Let Tertschka out!" repeated George again.

The overseer's hands began to shake. As George repeated his demand for the third time in a more imperative tone, he started up with clenched fists. "Be off," he shouted, "unless——"

"Unless what?" repeated George calmly. "You cannot frighten me with all your bluster. You ill-treated me when I was weak and defenceless. Now I defy you to your face!"

The overseer's countenance was terrible to look at. Hate and vengeance struggled on it with the basest cowardice. He gasped for breath, and his curved fingers seemed to clutch at something to rend to pieces.

"I advise you," said George, "to give up Tertschka, or else I shall use force."

In the midst of this scene several of the workmen had entered the cabin. Noon was approaching; perhaps they were also not unwilling to be witnesses of a scene which promised to be stormy. Their presence appeared to increase the irritation of the overseer. He felt that all their eyes were upon him, and to conceal his trepidation from those scrutinising glances he assumed an air of insolence.

"Just listen to the cur! He threatens me. Come, kick him out of the place for me."

The men looked hesitatingly at one another, but no one stirred.

"You see," George continued, "no one will touch me. I ask you for the last time to let Tertschka out, or I will use this hammer. Two blows, and the door will be smashed to atoms."

"You would break down the door, would you, you scoundrel? Be off, or I will send for the police."

"Send for them," cried George, his blood boiling with righteous indignation. "We will soon see who is in the right. You will have to explain why you have locked Tertschka up. Every one shall know that you have ill-treated her from childhood, that you have stolen from her the wages which she gained with so much labour.

They shall also know how you oppress the feeble, and how you enrich yourself with the sweat and blood of the poor labourers confided to your charge." George stopped. The truth of his reproaches stung his adversary into frenzy. The overseer's face turned livid. With a roar like that of a wounded bull, with foaming mouth and glaring eyes, he sprang at his opponent with his knife. George, on the other hand, scarcely knowing what he did, had gripped his hammer; it flew aloft; a dull blow resounded through the room, and the overseer, struck full upon the chest, staggered and fell backwards on the ground.

For an instant a death-like silence reigned. George stood like David over the dead body of Goliath. "Resi! Resi!" he cried suddenly, as if returning to himself; and rushing to the door, he broke it open with one blow. "You are free, our tyrant is no more."

"My God!" she shrieked, as she rushed out and saw the body lying stretched upon the ground. "He is dead! Oh! George! George! what have you done? You will be dragged to prison as a murderer."

"So be it! Nay, I will render myself up to justice. I will answer for my conduct to the court. My comrades can bear witness that the overseer attacked me with a knife and that I struck in self-defence. Go," he added, turning to the men. "Go to the police and tell them that George Huber, the stone-breaker, has killed your overseer."

V

For four months George lay in the prison fortress of Wiener-Neustadt awaiting his trial. Then he and his witnesses, among whom was Tertschka, were brought before the court-martial. The following sentence was passed:

"George Huber, formerly a soldier in the 12th Regiment, having pleaded guilty of causing by a blow the death of the overseer at Semmering, is sentenced to a year's imprisonment. But taking into consideration the evidence of the witnesses, who swear that he only acted in self-defence, after the highest provocation, and his exemplary conduct whilst in the army, coupled with the personal testimony of those who know him, the Court reduces his sentence to the four months of imprisonment which he has already undergone in the fortress of Wiener-Neustadt since his arrest."

Two days after this George and Tertschka were sent for to the colonel's house. He regarded them for a moment in silence. Their sad story had touched him to the heart. Round these two poor creatures, tortured by the miseries of existence, shone the radiance of a love pure, deep, and sublime. He advised them to remain at Wiener-Neustadt, where he would procure them work, and a salary

sufficient to supply their wants. He promised to do still more for them in the future, and he kept his word.

To-day, where the black rails wind beside the gleaming River Mour, in the midst of green pastures and forests of sweet-scented pine trees, where the castle Ehrenhauser rears its lofty towers upon the hill which overlooks the village, there stands a pretty little cottage. Behind the house extends a field of vegetables and maize. Roses and great golden-petalled sunflowers bloom before the door. A hedge surrounds the whole, over which the sweet pea twines its delicate tendrils.

In this pretty cottage, whose gay exterior attracts the admiration of the passers-by, George and Tertschka dwell. Their work allows them ample leisure to cultivate their ground, to keep a goat and a brood of cackling fowls, and to bring up two chubby-cheeked, flaxen-haired children, who thrive amazingly behind the high hedge of sweet peas. In the evening they sit together before their cottage door, while the sunset dyes the sky with crimson flame, and their thoughts return to that well-remembered evening when first they saw each other upon the high summits of the Semmering, and to their past with all its suffering and its joys.

If these memories cast too sad a shadow on their minds they draw their laughing cherubs to their knees, and with the little, clinging arms around their necks, the silky hair against their cheeks, and the sweet innocent eyes, regarding theirs, they forget, as if it were a dream, their past experience of the tears and sorrows which are the destined lot of every child of man.

LEOPOLD VON SACHER-MASOCH

1835–1895

THOU SHALT NOT KILL

Countess Mara Barovic was the Circe, Omphale, and Semiramis of the mountainous part of Croatia.

Old and young (men, be it understood) were at her feet; and this despite the fact that she was regarded as plain-looking rather than pretty. Her ugliness, however, was the sort that strikes attention, attracts consideration, and excites interest. Moreover, she boasted a " past " that cast a halo about the present.

It was rumoured that one of her lovers had " accidentally " shot her husband while out hunting, and that this accident had occurred at a time when the Count had become " embarrassing."

Besides, she was original.

If it be true that woman is a work of art, as a celebrated poet has said, it must be borne in mind that in these days the agreeable and pleasing in art is no longer " the thing." Cruel, unadorned truth is preferred to draped loveliness, in love as well as in art.

The Countess belonged to the type demanded by the modern school. By her two most ardent admirers, Baron Kronenfels and Herr De Broda, she was termed respectively the iconoclast and the naturalist.

She mounted her horse like a hussar, was a dashing rider, and indulged a passionate fondness for hunting. One of her favourite pastimes was roaming field and forest in the picturesque costume of the Croatian peasant; and she could apply the horsewhip as dexterously and mercilessly to her creditors as to her refractory horses.

The fair lady was head over ears in debt. There was nothing she could longer call her own, not even the furniture in Château Granic, not even the false braid which adorned her well-poised little head.

The young aristocrats who danced attendance upon her ladyship explained the preference displayed by this Croatian Circe for the " wise men of the East "—as they called Kronenfels and De Broda—by the brilliant financial position of her two Jewish admirers.

Of the two, Baron Kronenfels's noble birth rested upon the more ancient foundation, and for that reason, perhaps, he enjoyed a certain priority in the fair lady's esteem. De Broda was a mere sapling in the forest of aristocracy, having been but recently ennobled. The unfeigned adoration he displayed for his armorial bearings made him the butt of endless practical jokes. His coat-of-arms glittered wherever it could find a resting-place. It shone upon the collar of his dog; it was emblazoned on his cigarettes, made especially for him at Laferme's.

Despite certain differences of taste, Kronenfels and De Broda were good friends, good comrades as well, for they were both officers in the Reserve. But how often does friendship stand its ground against the whispers of jealousy, especially when a woman's favour is the prize at stake? The relationship between the two grew strained and unnatural, and they were both secretly conscious that they were walking along a path where the least deviation from the centre would result in a catastrophe.

. . . . . .

The long-looked-for altercation took place one evening at the club. Wine had been flowing freely, the betting had been high. Countess Mara was the subject under discussion, and Baron Roukavina was telling an amusing story in that lady's eventful life.

She had not paid her taxes for years, was threatened with an execution, and had been moving heaven and earth to avert the impending disgrace. She had gone to Agram, from there to Buda-Pesth, importuning ministers, seeking favour with deputies, and had actually got so far as to ask an audience of the king. She had received hopeful promises everywhere, but the danger hung heavier over her head with the passing of every hour.

At this particular juncture Baron Meyerbach called on her, and offered to settle her troubles. Meyerbach was an intelligent fellow, with a good heart, and a purse with the proverbial open mouth; but Hungarian aristocracy could not receive him within its inner circle for the simple reason that he was a Jew.

"Have you so much influence?" asked the Countess. Her breath was almost taken away by the offer.

"Do not inquire too closely into my *modus operandi*, Countess," said the Baron. "It must be sufficient for you to know that my success is assured."

"And what do you ask in exchange for this service?"

"Simply this: that for the next two weeks you will take a walk with me every day for an hour in Vaitzen Street; that you will skate with me an hour in the park; and that each evening you will give me the privilege of escorting you to a different theatre."

"And is that all?"

"All."

The Countess yielded willingly to the Baron's terms. At the end of the fortnight she received a receipt in full for the payment of her taxes—thirty-two thousand florins—and Baron Meyerbach found Hungarian aristocracy ready to receive him with open arms even within its most inner of inner circles. The Countess had launched him.

The story closed in a burst of laughter, and the diplomat Meyerbach's health was drunk repeatedly and variously.

Of all the convivial party De Broda alone was silent. Finally, with Goethe's words in mind, he said in a low voice: " Everybody seeks money, and everybody clings to it."

Kronenfels flung his cards noisily on the table, looked savagely at De Broda, and said, with an ugly frown: " Do you imply by that that such a woman as Countess Mara Barovic would willingly let herself be blinded by money? "

De Broda shrugged his shoulders.

Springing from his seat, the Baron cried out scornfully: " You are a Jew."

For a moment participants and listeners seemed paralysed with astonishment; then De Broda, every nerve tingling with rage, hurled angrily back at his assailant: " You are another! "

A challenge to a duel was the result of the quarrel. Seconds were chosen on the spot, the weapons were to be pistols, and the oak forest near De Granic was to witness the affair early the following morning.

. . . . . .

De Broda had gone home. He was arranging his papers in order when Rabbi Solomon Zuckermandel walked into his sanctum.

" You are going to fight? " were the old man's first words.

" Yes."

" And with a Jew? No, Herr De Broda; you cannot, you dare not shoot a man! You will not do it."

" Pardon me, Rabbi Solomon, but my knowledge is somewhat deeper than yours in affairs of honour."

" Do you think so? " replied the old man, with an indulgent smile. " Ah, well, we shall see. You think we can wash our honour only in blood? My dear Herr De Broda, spotless honour needs no washing; and if it has a blemish, it cannot be effaced even by blood. The Baron called you a Jew. Is that an insult? "

" In the sense he attached to the word, yes."

" Not so. Neither in that sense nor in any other. Does the name of soldier become an insult because soldiers have deserted their flag? The Jews we call to mind when the word ' Jew ' is used in reproach are those who have forsaken their standard. They are no longer Jews. Judaism is the fear of the Lord, love of liberty, love of the family and humanity. The honour of the Jew consists

not in spilling blood, but in acting uprightly and doing good."

"You are right; but——"

"No, no. No 'buts.' When God in the midst of thunder and lightning gave the Tables of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, there were no 'buts'; He said: *'Thou shalt not kill!'* You are a Jew, Herr De Broda. In other words: Man, thou shalt not kill!"

The young fellow turned towards the window. The rabbi should not see his emotion. But the Jewish heart was touched, and the old man, who gave no thought to title and coat-of-arms, had conquered the aristocrat's pride and prejudice.

. . . . . .

Midnight had struck when Rabbi Solomon reached Kronenfels's quarters. The letter he handed the Baron from his adversary read as follows:

"DEAR SIR—You have insulted me grossly in calling me a Jew in the presence of a number of gentlemen, and have added to the insult, as it were, by making it at a time when Herr De Treitschke in Berlin has spoken of the Jews as the "schlamassl" [the plague of the Germans]. You are, however, an only son, the pride of your family, and I should like to avoid our meeting for to-morrow. You have often seen me hit the ace at a good range; and you know as well that I am no phrase-maker. I propose, therefore, that we shall both shoot in the air, and that we shall mutually exchange our word of honour not to speak of this arrangement.

BRODA."

Kronenfels held the letter to the rabbi.

"What is to be done?" he asked, with a smile.

"Herr De Broda has proved himself a true Jew," responded Zuckermandel gently. "Do not let him surpass you. Prove to him that you, too, are of a race which, boasting the most ancient civilisation, is above all others from the humanitarian standpoint."

Kronenfels wrote some hurried lines, which Rabbi Solomon conveyed to Herr De Broda before daybreak. The Baron's answer was couched in these words:

"DEAR SIR—I was about to address you when I received your note.

"I, too, should deeply regret having a mortal encounter with a young man upon whom so many hopes are placed.

"I accept your proposition.

"Moreover, between ourselves be it said, we are Jews—in other words, descendants of ancestors whose house is more ancient than that of the Lichtensteins or Auerspergs, ancestors who have transmitted to us two qualities which Herr De Treitschke could scarcely

possess, being as it were the offshoot of a somewhat recent civilisation: and these are, repugnance to shed blood, and the 'rachmonni' [1] of the Jewish heart.

KRONENFELS."

The duel took place at six o'clock in the morning, the venerable oaks of De Granic forest casting an air of solemnity over the bloodless scene. The adversaries kept their word; the pistols were discharged in the air; and the witnesses declared that honourable satisfaction had been made. As De Broda and Kronenfels were shaking hands with hearty good-will, the brushwood parted, and old Rabbi Solomon slowly approached the young men. Raising his arms in benediction, he said, and the light of happiness beamed from his eyes: "Gentlemen, you are Jews!"

[1] Mercifulness.

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XVIII
SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

THE

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XVIII. SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

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Contents of Volume XVIII

			PAGE
	Introductory Essay . .	*Sir J. A. Hammerton* .	385
DCCCXXI.	A Young Man and his Many Friends	*Juan Manuel* . .	393
DCCCXXII.	The Naked King . .	„ „ . .	396
DCCCXXIII.	The Biter Bit . . .	*Anonymous* . . .	399
DCCCXXIV.	How Lazaro became the Servant of an Esquire . .	*Diego H. de Mendoza* .	400
DCCCXXV.	How Guzman excited the Compassion of the Cardinal	*Mateo Alemán* . .	413
DCCCXXVI.	The Pretended Aunt . .	*Miguel de Cervantes* .	417
DCCCXXVII.	The Vision of the Catchpole Possessed . . .	*Francisco de Quevedo* .	429
DCCCXXVIII.	The Dumb Lover and his Physician . . .	*Matías de los Reyes* .	437
DCCCXXIX.	An Andalusian Duel . .	*Serafín E. Calderón* .	443
DCCCXXX.	The Architect's Wife . .	*Antonio de Trueba* .	447
DCCCXXXI.	The Fairy Kiss . . .	*Juan Valera* . .	454
DCCCXXXII.	The Archbishop's Cook .	„ „ . .	460
DCCCXXXIII.	The Eloquent Basque . .	„ „ . .	462
DCCCXXXIV.	The Tall Woman . .	*Pedro A. de Alarcón* .	465
DCCCXXXV.	The Patriot Traitor . .	„ „ .	480
DCCCXXXVI.	The Cornet Player . .	„ „ .	487
DCCCXXXVII.	The Account-Book . .	„ „ .	496
DCCCXXXVIII.	Maese Pérez, the Organist .	*Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer* .	501
DCCCXXXIX.	Modern Life . . .	*Eusebio Blasco* . .	511
DCCCXL.	The Rustic Cobbler . .	„ „ . .	518
DCCCXLI.	Tierra-Tragona . . .	*Carlos Coello* . .	521
DCCCXLII.	The Southern Express .	*Emilia Pardo Bazán* .	527
DCCCXLIII.	The Pink Pearl . . .	„ „ .	532
DCCCXLIV.	The Green Fly . . .	„ „ .	537
DCCCXLV.	The Well of Life . .	„ „ .	542
DCCCXLVI.	A Pair of Scissors . .	„ „ .	546
DCCCXLVII.	First Love . . .	„ „ .	551
DCCCXLVIII.	Doctor Pertinax . .	"*Clarín*" (*L. Alás*) .	557
DCCCXLIX.	My Burial	„ „ .	563

			PAGE
DCCCL.	The Bird in the Snow	*Armando Palacio Valdés*	570
DCCCLI.	The Curate's Colt	„ „ „	580
DCCCLII.	After the Battle	*Jacinto Octavio Picón*	585
DCCCLIII.	Gasparon's Revenge	„ „ „	592
DCCCLIV.	The Condemned	*Vicente Blasco Ibáñez*	598
DCCCLV.	Eve and the Poor	„ „ „	603
DCCCLVI.	The Tomb of Ali-Bellus	„ „ „	607
DCCCLVII.	The Bourgeois King	*Rubén Darío*	611
DCCCLVIII.	The Water Nymph	„ „	615
DCCCLIX.	The Blue Bird	„ „	619
DCCCLX.	The Curse of Tongues	*José Fernandez Bremón*	622
DCCCLXI.	A Silken Cord	„ „ „	634
DCCCLXII.	The Expression	*José Francés*	639
DCCCLXIII.	From Bulto to Coracha	*Arturo Reyes*	644
DCCCLXIV.	What a Tear can Do	„ „	650
DCCCLXV.	Fear	*Ramón del Valle-Inclán*	655
DCCCLXVI.	Lucky Boy!	„ „ „	659
DCCCLXVII.	Her Father's Slave	*Elías Zerolo*	662
DCCCLXVIII.	Flowering Heather	*Carmen de Burgos*	672
DCCCLXIX.	La Mulata	*Juan de Dios Peza*	676

THE PORTUGUESE STORY-TELLERS

	Introductory Essay	*Sir J. A. Hammerton*	683
DCCCLXX.	The Village Priest	*Alexandro Herculano*	687
DCCCLXXI.	The Last Bull-fight in Salvaterra	*João Rebello da Silva*	695
DCCCLXXII.	Good Example	*Brito Aranha*	704
DCCCLXXIII.	The Greater Burden	*Rodrigo Paganino*	712
DCCCLXXIV.	The Fisherman of Lessa da Palmeira	*Julio Cesar Machado*	720
DCCCLXXV.	The Great Clock of Strassburg	*Theophilo Braga*	731
DCCCLXXVI.	The Three Brothers and the Treasure	*José M. Eça de Queiroz*	737
DCCCLXXVII.	Her Son	*José V. Fialho d'Almeida*	744
DCCCLXXVIII.	The Cup of Tea	*Affonso Botelho*	751
DCCCLXXIX.	The Sick Nurse	*Joaquim M. M. de Assiz*	758

THE SPANISH STORY-TELLERS

THE evolution of the Spanish story has followed a course very similar to the French. Though the literature of Spain is one of the richest, despite such glories as Cervantes, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, and Calderón it does not rival that of France, and by the same token the Spanish *cuento* lacks that ultimate touch of refinement which is the peculiar and enduring beauty of the French *conte*. Spain has many brilliant tellers of tales, yet there is little doubt that the relative dimensions of our respective selections from the French and the Spanish are proportionately representative. English readers may find in the one volume to which these words are introductory as much that is fresh and unexploited as in the four French volumes, for France has been, during the last generation or two, a veritable quarry for English translators, while Spanish literature has been curiously and unwisely neglected.

JUAN MANUEL

The first of the selections in chronological order takes us back to the earlier years of the fourteenth century, and to a writer who cut a great figure in his time. Don Juan Manuel (1282–1347) was the nephew of Alfonso X, and, like all Iberian authors to this day, his energies were not confined to literature. A man of State as well as poet and romancist, he exhibits strong traces of oriental influence in his celebrated masterpiece, *Count Lucanor*, from which two delightful stories are here given. "The Naked King" was doubtless Moorish in its origin, but the manner

of telling is characteristic of Juan Manuel and his age. George Meredith tricks out a somewhat similar story of Eastern origin in his tale of "The Punishment of Khipil" from *The Shaving of Shagpat*. "The Biter Bit" is an anonymous mediaeval "tale," here included to show how common to all European literatures was this brief anecdote form.

HURTADO DE MENDOZA

One of the most interesting classics of Spanish literature is the world-famous picaresque romance, "El Lazarillo de Tormes," the authorship of which has been the subject of many a learned disputation among the critics of later ages, though it is generally attributed to Hurtado de Mendoza (1503–1575). It was certainly published during his lifetime, and at a period of his career when his literary powers would be at their ripest. Hurtado, like Juan Manuel, was a man of affairs; he was Carlos V's ambassador to the Council of Trent. His greatest claim to be remembered, however, would be his authorship of this most entertaining of vagabond novels. The short story, "How Lazaro became the Servant of an Esquire," which has been taken from the long and formless romance, is thoroughly representative of the spirit and character of those picaresque writings which later inspired the essentially English genius of Fielding and Smollett, and informed their work.

MATEO ALEMÁN—MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

In the year 1547 two authors were born in Spain, one of whom was destined to produce an abiding monument of Spanish genius, world-famous and elemental. But of Mateo Alemán (1547–1610) not a great deal is remembered even in Spain, and nothing at all in England. A person with a strong philosophic cast of mind, he chose the romance form of his day as a vehicle for his ponderings on life, and the extraordinary popularity his picaresque novel, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, achieved on its publication in 1599, despite its author's philosophic musings, indicates a certain robustness in the literary taste of the day. Many stories similar in character to that here extracted from the romance of *Guzmán* are embodied in the work, and provide good examples of the short story in the early stage of its development. The other Spanish author, born in the same year as Alemán, is he whom Spain rightly regards as the peculiar glory of her literature—Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra. The immortal author of *Don Quijote* was born at Alcalá de Henares in 1547. He fought as a soldier in the Spanish army, winning some distinction at Lepanto. After many adventures, he became in middle life a collector of taxes and a disappointed candidate for recogni-

tion at Court. In 1605 he had published the first part of *Don Quijote* the fame of which was sufficient to inspire numerous imitations and false claims to its authorship. This great humorous masterpiece was written to satirise the fantastic romances which had then become so popular, and were really no more than a very early form of the modern servant-girl's penny novelette. Cervantes did not write the second part of *Don Quijote* until 1615, and early in the succeeding year he died at Madrid. Apart from his great masterpiece, which will endure so long as mankind appreciates the salutary value of ridicule and is touched emotionally by deep, true, and tender humour, Cervantes wrote many plays and shorter fictions, the latter modelled somewhat on the Italian *novella*. His *Exemplary Novels*, as Cervantes described these, first bent Sir Walter Scott's mind towards fiction, and they are most delightful reading. The example here chosen is typical, but preference has been given to it chiefly because it is one of the shortest, most of these tales of the immortal humorist tending to outrun the dimensions, not only of the modern short story, but of the Italian form on which they are planned.

QUEVEDO—MATÍAS DE LOS REYES

Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645) is to Spanish literature what Swift is to English, Rabelais to French : " a jest on his lips and stoicism in his breast," one of his fellow-countrymen writes of him. He led a life of great activity as statesman and diplomatist, and his histories, novels, poems, and satires, which seem to have been many, though few have been preserved, were the fruit of his leisure. Quevedo's name is remembered chiefly for the authorship of one of the picaresque classics, *El Gran Tacaño*. His curious story of " The Catchpole Possessed " is still popular with Spanish readers, and has also had circulation in English. The last of the early Spanish writers here represented is Matías de los Reyes, poet and dramatist, born at Madrid in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and living there in 1640. Little is known of him, and he is little read except in a few short stories from his longer works ; the example here included is regarded as his best.

ESTÉBANEZ—TRUEBA—VALERA

With Serafin Estébanez Calderón (1799–1867) we come to the writers of modern fiction, Estébanez being one of " the fathers of the Spanish novel." *Andalusian Scenes*, published in 1847, is a collection of his amusing short stories, of which one of the best is here included.

Antonio de Trueba (1821–1888) is famed as a " popular " poet, his themes being usually chosen for their appeal to the sympathies of the widest audience. Apart from his poetry—every Spanish writer is a poet of sorts, the language lending itself so readily to poetic expression—Trueba's name is associated with a large mass of miscellaneous writing and numerous short stories of real merit. " The Architect's Wife," typical of his work, is one of the most memorable short stories in any European literature. It is interesting to record that the late Jabez Spencer Balfour, while undergoing his imprisonment, wrote a very remarkable narrative poem in English, founded upon this story of Trueba's, and the present writer, then editor of the *London Magazine*, published it in his Christmas number of 1906. In Juan Valera (1824–1905) we have one of the greatest prose masters of modern Spain. Novelist and critic, author and poet, his works are read by Spaniards chiefly for their perfection of literary form. We get a good idea of Valera's lightness of touch in the very charming story, " The Fairy Kiss," and the other two selections are from his " Andalusian Stories," to the writing of which he turned as a relief from the more serious and stately work of literature which usually engaged him.

PEDRO A. DE ALARCÓN

Although the Andalusian is often the butt of Spanish wit, and serves the Castillian much as the Irishman does the English, Andalusia has produced many of Spain's most charming and characteristic writers. One of the greatest of these is Pedro A. de Alarcón (1833–1891), who began life as a student of law, and something of a revolutionary, but became a soldier and fought heroically for Spain in Morocco, and wound up a distinguished career in the sanctity of the Spanish Royal Academy. He displays a fine quality of narrative, his fiction as a whole being even more notable for smoothness of style than for creative power. His numerous short stories exist in many collections still popular with his countrymen. There is a true sense of the weird in " The Tall Woman," and " The Patriot Traitor " is surely one of the most dramatic of stories told in so short a space. Humour as well as tragic interest distinguishes " The Cornet Player," and " The Account-Book " is a delightful example of the peasant tale which Alarcón delighted to write.

BÉCQUER—BLASCO—COELLO

Best known in Spanish literature as a poet, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836–1870) had something of the qualities of Heine, and although not particularly memorable as a writer of fiction, he has left in " Maese

Pérez " one of the finest of Spanish short stories. Eusebio Blasco (1844–1903), on the other hand, was a most prolific author and dramatist, who nearly always worked the lighter vein. The mordant satire of " Modern Life," a delightfully amusing story, is typical of his style, and " The Rustic Cobbler " of a story form immensely popular with Spanish readers. Blasco's complete works fill some twenty-seven volumes. Of Carlos Coello (1850–1888) little is known, and probably nothing of his has ever previously been done into English. He wrote a considerable number of fantastic stories in the 'seventies, and one of his collections is entitled *Unlikely Stories*. " Tierra-Tragona " is an excellent specimen of the collection named.

PARDO BAZÁN

Probably the most remarkable literary figure in the modern life of Spain has been the Countess Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1921). Poet, novelist, critic, dramatist, biographer, historian, lecturer—such were the varied rôles which this extraordinary woman filled with almost equal success throughout her long and brilliant career. " The late Mrs. Oliphant multiplied by five or six " would be the nearest approach the present writer could make to a one-line description of the Countess Pardo Bazán. Mrs. Oliphant wrote chiefly under the goad of necessity ; but probably the sheer love of writing urged the pen of the Spanish countess, whose productivity has been phenomenal. Her *Collected Works*, which appeared before her death, extended to some three- or four-score volumes ! Probably sixty stout octavos would not hold the sum total of her output ! Spanish writers are not timorous of " overproduction." They have never " specialised " like the lesser English professionals of letters. They have a large enough sense of literature to lift them into the atmosphere of those classic authors who could build a house or fight a battle as well as write a book. Yet Spanish critics, astounded at the tireless activity of the Countess Pardo Bazán, have ventured to speculate whether she might not have done more enduring work had she done less. The present writer has read hundreds of her short stories, and does not recall one that was quite unworthy. At her worst, she is probably head and shoulders above many English writers whose short stories command high prices in the periodicals of our time. Six stories from her pen have here been chosen, and sixty could have been given, each of them almost as good as any one of these. It will be noted by the critical reader that they approach more closely to the French *conte* than any of the preceding stories in this volume, though later we shall note evidence of French influence on modern Spanish writers. The Countess was unlike most of her contem-

poraries in a certain disregard for the refinements of literary style, having preferred to exert her powers chiefly in the invention of plot and the play of character.

"CLARÍN"—PALACIO VALDÉS

The two story selections from the writings of "Clarín" (Leopoldo Alás) (1852–1905) are entirely in harmony with the rather biting and cynical criticism which, as a journalist, was his chief stock-in-trade. He wrote a few novels, the best of which was *La Regenta*, published in 1884, and his many short stories were probably undertaken as a relief from the daily task of journalism. Palacio Valdés (b. 1853), who began his literary career as a critic, ranks as one of the greatest contemporary figures in the world of Spanish letters. He has excelled as a novelist, and his name is famous far beyond his native country, where the most esteemed of his works of fiction is *La Hermana San Sulpicio*. He has written much in philosophy, having endeavoured to explain pragmatism to the Spanish public, and in his shorter pieces, and particularly his short stories, he has portrayed country life and manners with great fidelity and delightful humour, his peasant types reminding us somewhat of Thomas Hardy's. In "The Bird in the Snow" we have the philosopher talking to us in the guise of the story-teller, while "The Curate's Colt" is an admirable example of the rustic.

JACINTO PICÓN—BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

Jacinto Picón (1853–1923) we distinguish as a Spanish writer who was entirely under the influence of the modern French school which has been oddly named "Naturalist." His chief concern, in common with most of the writers who are supposed to come within that category, was with the relations of the sexes; but he had the gift of the story-teller in a high degree, and it is a very subtle charm of manner, as well as the French touch, that makes "After the Battle" a short-story masterpiece. "Gasparon's Revenge" is no unworthy companion to it. His contemporary, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (1867–1928), was better known as a writer of long novels. He occupied much the same place in Spanish literature as Hall Caine does in English or Georges Ohnet in French. That is to say, he commanded multitudes of readers, wrote long and pretentious narratives—such as the highly successful "Blood and Sand"—but most of his work was too "popular" to endure. He was the author of many short stories, chiefly written for the newspapers, and his abundant invention was well applied in the three examples here included.

RUBÉN DARÍO

A writer of a very different class from any of the foregoing, and a man of extraordinary character, was Rubén Darío (1867–1916). A Nicaraguan by birth, he began as a poet, and continued always a poet, but wrote through a strange and restless life much criticism, many sketches of travel, and a few short stories. Accepted as the greatest writer of the Spanish language in his day, no poet or prose writer of the last fifty years excelled him in the purity and richness of his literary style. Darío died in the autumn of 1916 in his native country, after having spent most of his life a wanderer in the other states of South America and in France and Spain. Extraordinary ceremonies were observed at his death, the State giving him a military funeral and the Church granting him the ritual decreed for Roman Catholic princes. Literary societies held funeral feasts copied from the traditional ceremonies of the Greek burial of national heroes. This would have accorded well with Darío's classical tastes, as he was intensely moved by Greek and Latin culture. His work is marked by a sensuous delight in the old myths of nymph and faun, and all his verse is essentially of the fleshly school, but charged with wonderful beauty of form and fancy. His short stories are few in number, but each a tiny masterpiece, and the three here chosen would no doubt have been the poet's own selection.

VALLE-INCLÁN AND OTHERS

Little is known of José Fernandez Bremón, except that he was a cultured writer, and, unlike most of his contemporaries, not voluminous. Fascinated by the bizarre or the extraordinary—in one of his stories he attempts to study the emotions of a man with two heads !—we find him turning to the East for inspiration, as in " A Silken Cord " ; but there is real power behind the fantastic notion of " The Curse of Tongues." José Francés is a very able contemporary author who, like Picón, would probably agree to be classed among the " Naturalists," and for similar reasons. But the story we have chosen, though probably one of the most effective he has ever written, is quite uncharacteristic, in that it is entirely without sex interest. Arturo Reyes (1864–1913), an Andalusian, was another of the Spanish story-tellers who prided themselves on their "modernity," while Ramón del Valle-Inclán (b. 1869) is a great stylist, accepted in Spain as one of the most refined of modern writers. A poet before he became novelist, in his fiction he remains still something of the poet. The examples of his work here given are very brief, but show a remarkable power to convey atmosphere and character. The story of Brazilian life, " Her Father's Slave," by Elias Zerolo (d. 1900), is included rather for its intrinsic merit than because of any reputation

attaching to the author's name, which is quite unknown outside his native literature, and there is overshadowed by many. We have no note of the author of "Flowering Heather," but Juan de Dios Peza is, of course, world-famous as the one great novelist that Mexico has produced. His works have been translated into many languages, including Russian, Swedish and Japanese, and "La Mulata," by which he is represented here, is a short story at once very characteristic of the author and of his native land. J. A. H.

JUAN MANUEL

1282–1347

A YOUNG MAN AND HIS MANY FRIENDS

From "El Conde Lucanor"

A certain good man had a son; and among other matters which he advised, he enjoined him always to endeavour to obtain a great number of friends; and the son did as he was told. He began to keep much company, and to share his substance among different individuals whom he esteemed as his friends, and ready to do anything in their power to pleasure him;—nay, insomuch as to venture their lives and substance, if need be, in his behalf.

And one day this young man, conversing with his father, was asked whether he had done as he had been commanded, and had yet obtained many friends.

And the son replied that he had; and in particular, that among others, there were ten of whom he was most assured, that never in any difficulty or necessity whatever would they be led to desert him.

When the father heard this, he said he was greatly surprised that his son had been able in so short a time to obtain so many friends; and such as he, who was an old man, had never been fortunate enough to possess during his whole life, at all events never counting more than one friend and a half. And the son began to argue with him, maintaining that what he had said of his friends was only the truth.

When the father saw that his son was so eager on their behalf, he said that he ought to proceed to prove it in the following manner. First, that he should kill a pig, and having put it into a sack, should go with it to the house of one of his friends, and when admitted there, tell him secretly,—not that it was a pig, but a man whom he had unhappily killed. Further, that if this fact should be made known, it would be quite impossible for him to escape with his life; and that all those who knew of it would be likely to share with him in the same fate. That his son should

enjoin them, since they were his friends, not to reveal the fact; and that if need be, they should unite with him and defend him.

And the youth did this: going to the house of his friends, he informed them of the fatal accident that had befallen him. They all, one after another, declared, that in all other matters they would serve him to the utmost, but that on such an occasion, which would endanger both their lives and property, they dare not assist him; beseeching him, at the same time, for the love of God, not to breathe to a single being that he had been at their houses. Some of them, indeed, said that they would go to solicit on his behalf; and others observed that they would do as much, and, moreover, would not desert him even till after his execution, and that they would then give him honourable interment.

And after the youth had thus tried the sincerity of all his friends, without finding any to receive him, he returned to his father, and related what had happened. And when the father saw that it so fell out, he said to his son, that he might now very well see how those who had lived long, and seen and experienced much in such a matter, knew more than their sons. He then added, that he himself had only one friend and a half, and that he might go and try them.

The young man went accordingly to prove what his father had meant by half a friend, and he took the dead pig along with him. He called at the door of his father's half friend, and recounted to him first the unlucky adventure which had befallen him; that he had spoken with all his friends in vain, and beseeched him, by the regard he bore his father, to assist him now in this his utter need.

And when his father's half friend saw this, he said that he had a regard for the father, but had no sort of love for or acquaintance with the son; but that for his father's sake, he was willing to assist him, and to conceal the affair. He then took the sack with the pig, and carried it into his orchard, where he deposited it in a deep furrow, and covered the spot with weeds and vegetables to conceal it from every eye.

The youth then returned and acquainted his father with what had occurred in regard to this his half friend. He next ordered his son, on a certain day, when they should all be engaged in council, to start some question, and discuss it with this same friend very warmly, till at length he should deal him a hard blow in the face, which, when the opportunity served, was accordingly done.

But the good man, on being smitten, only said, "By my faith, young man, thou hast done ill; yet thou mayest be assured, that neither for this or other injury thou canst do, will I reveal what happened in the garden."

The son afterwards reported this to his father, who then told him to go to the house of his other friend, and he did so.

And again he recounted all that had happened; and the good friend of his father directly said, that he would do all to save his life and his reputation. And it by chance happened that a man had been killed in that town, and none knew by whom; but several people having noticed the youth going along at night with the sack upon his shoulders, they concluded that he was no other than the murderer.

In short, they informed of him, and the youth was taken and pronounced guilty of the offence; but his father's friend all the while exerted himself to compass his escape. And when he saw that there was no way left to save him from death, he said to the Alcalde, that he did not wish to have the sin of killing that young man upon his conscience, for, in fact, it was not he who had killed the man, but a son of his own, and the only one he had; and in this way did he succeed in saving the life of his friend's son, by the hard sacrifice of his own.

JUAN MANUEL

THE NAKED KING

THREE impostors came to a King and told him they were cloth-weavers, and could fabricate a cloth of so peculiar a nature that a legitimate son of his father could see the cloth; but if he were illegitimate, though believed to be legitimate, he could not see it.

Now the King was much pleased at this, thinking that by this means he would be able to distinguish the men in his kingdom who were legitimate sons of their supposed fathers from those who were not, and so be enabled to increase his treasures, for among the Moors only legitimate children inherit their father's property; and for this end he ordered a palace to be appropriated to the manufacture of this cloth. And these men, in order to convince him that they had no intention of deceiving him, agreed to be shut up in this palace until the cloth was manufactured, which satisfied the King.

When they were supplied with a large quantity of gold, silver, silk, and many other things, they entered the palace, and, putting their looms in order, gave it to be understood that they were working all day at the cloth.

After some days, one of them came to the King and told him the cloth was commenced, that it was the most curious thing in the world, describing the design and construction; he then prayed the King to favour them with a visit, but begged he would come alone. The King was much pleased, but wishing to have the opinion of some one first, sent the Lord Chamberlain to see it, in order to know if they were deceiving him. When the Lord Chamberlain saw the workmen, and heard all they had to say, he dared not admit he could not see the cloth, and when he returned to the King he stated that he had seen it; the King sent yet another, who gave the same report. When they whom he had sent declared that they had seen the cloth, he determined to go himself.

On entering the palace and seeing the men at work, who began to describe the texture and relate the origin of the invention, as also the design and colour, in which they all appeared to agree, although in reality they were not working; when the King saw how they appeared to work, and heard the character of the cloth so minutely described, and yet could not see it, although those he

had sent had seen it, he began to feel very uneasy, fearing he might not be the son of the King who was supposed to be his father, and that if he acknowledged he could not see the cloth he might lose his kingdom; under this impression he commenced praising the fabric, describing its peculiarities after the manner of the workmen.

On the return to his palace he related to his people how good and marvellous was the cloth, yet at the same time suspected something wrong.

At the end of two or three days the King requested his "Alguacil" (or officer of justice) to go and see the cloth. When the Alguacil entered and saw the workmen, who, as before, described the figures and pattern of the cloth, knowing that the King had been to see it, and yet could not see it himself, he thought he certainly could not be the legitimate son of his father, and therefore could not see it. He, however, feared if he was to declare that he could not see it he would lose his honourable position; to avoid this mischance he commenced praising the cloth even more vehemently than the others.

When the Alguacil returned to the King and told him that he had seen the cloth, and that it was the most extraordinary production in the world, the King was much disconcerted; for he thought that if the Alguacil had seen the cloth, which he was unable to see, there could no longer be a doubt that he was not the legitimate son of the King, as was generally supposed; he therefore did not hesitate to praise the excellency of the cloth and the skill of the workmen who were able to make it.

On another day he sent one of his Councillors, and it happened to him as to the King and the others of whom I have spoken; and in this manner, and for this reason, they deceived the King and many others, for no one dared to say he could not see the cloth.

Things went on thus until there came a great feast, when all requested the King to be dressed in some of the cloth; so the workmen, being ordered, brought some rolled up in a very fine linen, and inquired of the King how much of it he wished them to cut off; so the King gave orders how much and how to make it up.

Now when the clothes were made, and the feast day had arrived, the weavers brought them to the King, informed His Majesty that his dress was made of the cloth as he had directed, the King all this time not daring to say he could not see it.

When the King had professed to dress himself in this suit, he mounted on horseback and rode into the city; but fortunately for him it was summer time. The people seeing His Majesty come in this manner were much surprised; but knowing that those who could not see this cloth would be considered illegitimate sons of their fathers, kept their surprise to themselves, fearing the dishonour consequent upon such a declaration.

Not so, however, with a negro, who happened to notice the King thus equipped; for he, having nothing to lose, came to him and said, "Sire, to me it matters not whose son I am, therefore I tell you that you are riding without any clothes."

On this the King commenced beating him, saying that he was not the legitimate son of his supposed father, and therefore it was that he could not see the cloth. But no sooner had the negro said this, than others were convinced of its truth, and said the same; until, at last, the King and all with him lost their fear of declaring the truth, and saw through the trick of which these impostors had made them the victims.

When the weavers were sought for they were found to have fled, taking with them all they had received from the King by their imposition.

ANONYMOUS

15TH CENTURY

THE BITER BIT

Who thinks to take another in
Is oft in his turn taken in.

Two townsmen and a countryman, on a pilgrimage to Mecca, agreed to share provisions till they should reach Mecca. But the victuals ran short, so that they had nothing left but a little flour—enough to make a loaf.

And the townsmen, seeing that, said one to the other:

"We have but little food, and our companion eats much, how shall we bring about that he shall eat none of the bread, and that we alone eat it?"

And they took this counsel—they would make the loaf, and whilst it was baking should all go to sleep, and whoever dreamed the most marvellous thing in that time, he should alone eat the bread.

This they did, thinking to betray the simple rustic, and they made the loaf and put it to bake, and then lay down to sleep. But the rustic saw through their treachery, and when the companions were sleeping took the half-baked bread, ate it, and turned to sleep.

Then one of the townsmen awoke as one dreaming and afraid, and called to his companion; and the other said, "What hast thou?"

"I saw a marvellous vision: methought two angels opened the gates of heaven, and bore me before the face of God."

And his companion said, "Marvellous is that vision. But I dreamed that two angels seized me, and, cleaving the earth, bore me to hell."

The rustic heard all this and pretended to sleep, but the others called out to him to awake, and he discreetly, as one amazed, replied, "Who are ye that are calling me?"

They replied, "We are thy companions."

And he said, "Have ye returned?"

And they said, "Whence wouldst thou have us return?"

And the rustic said, "But now methought I saw two angels take the one of you to heaven, and then two other angels take the other to hell; and seeing this, and thinking you would neither return, I got up and ate the loaf."

DIEGO HURTADO DE MENDOZA

1503–1575

HOW LAZARO BECAME THE SERVANT OF AN ESQUIRE

One day in Toledo I accidentally encountered a certain esquire in the street; he was of a good appearance, well dressed, and walked with an air of ease and consequence. As I cast my eyes upon him, he fortunately took notice of me, and said:

"Are you seeking a master, my boy?"

I replied that I was.

"Then follow me," said he; "you have reason to thank your stars for this meeting: doubtless you have said your prayers with a better grace than usual this morning."

I followed him, returning thanks to Providence for this singular good turn of fortune, for, if one might judge from appearances, here was exactly the situation which I had so long desired. It was early in the morning when I was engaged by this kind master, and I continued to follow him, as he desired, till we made the tour of a great part of the city. As we passed the market, I hoped that he would give me a load to carry home, as it was then about the hour that people usually made their purchases of that nature; but he passed by without taking the slightest notice.

"Peradventure," quoth I to myself, "these commodities are not exactly to his taste; we shall be more fortunate in some other quarter."

It was now eleven o'clock, and my master went into the cathedral to hear prayers, where I likewise followed him. Here we stayed until the whole service was finished and the congregation were departed; and then my master left, and proceeded towards one of the back streets of the city. Never was anybody more delighted than I, to find my master had not condescended to trouble himself about supplying his table, concluding, of course, that he was a gentleman whose means enabled him to consign to others such inferior domestic cares, and that on our arrival at home we should find everything in order,—an anticipation of great delight to me, and, in fact, by this time almost a matter of necessity. The

clock had struck one, when we arrived at a house before which my master stopped, and throwing his cloak open, he drew from his sleeve a key with which he opened the door.

I followed my master into the house, the entrance of which was extremely dark and dismal, so much so, as to create a sensation of fear in the mind of a stranger; and when within found it contained a small courtyard and tolerably sized chambers. The moment he entered, he took off his cloak, and inquiring whether I had clean hands, assisted me to fold it, and then, carefully wiping the dust from a seat, laid it thereon. He next very composedly seated himself, and began to ask me a variety of questions, as to who I was, where I came from, and how I came to that city; to all which I gave a more particular account than exactly suited me at that time, for I thought it would have been much more to the purpose had he desired me to place the table and serve up the soup, than ask me the questions he then did.

With all this, however, I contrived to give him a very satisfactory account of myself, dwelling on my good qualities, and concealing those which were not suitable to my present auditory. But I began now to grow very uneasy, for two o'clock arrived, and still no signs of dinner appeared, and I began to recollect that ever since we had been in the house I had not heard the foot of a human being, either above or below. All I had seen were bare walls, without even a chair or a table,—not so much as an old chest like that I had such good occasion to remember. In fact, it seemed to me like a house labouring under the influence of enchantment.

"Boy, hast thou eaten anything to-day?" asked my master at last.

"No, sir," I replied, "seeing that it was scarcely eight o'clock when I had the good fortune to meet your honour."

"Early as it was," returned my master, "I had already breakfasted, and it is never my custom to eat again till the evening; manage as you can till then; you will have the better appetite for supper."

It may be easily supposed that, on hearing this, my newly-raised hopes vanished as rapidly as they had risen; it was not hunger alone that caused me to despond, but the certainty that Fortune had not yet exhausted her full store of malice against me. I could not but weep over the incidents of my past unfortunate career, and anticipate its rapidly approaching close; yet withal, concealing my emotion as well as possible, I said:

"Thank God, sir, I am not a boy that troubles himself much about eating and drinking; and for this quality I have been praised even to this very day by all the masters whom I have ever served."

"Abstinence is a great virtue," returned my master, "and for

this I shall esteem thee still more; gormandising is only for swine, men of understanding require little to allay their appetite."

"I can understand that sentiment right well," quoth I to myself; "my masters have all advised the same course; though the devil a bit do *they* find the virtues of starvation so very pleasant, by all that I have seen."

Seating myself near the door, I now began to eat some crusts of bread which I had about me; they were part of some scraps I had collected in my career of charity.

"Come here, boy," said my master, "what are you eating?"

I went to him, and showed him the bread. He selected from the three pieces which I had, the best and largest, and said, "Upon my life, but this seems exceedingly nice bread."

"Yes, sir," I replied, "it is very good."

"It really is," he continued, "where did you get it? was it made with clean hands, I wonder?"

"That I can't answer for," I replied, "but the flavour of it does not come amiss to me."

"Nor to me either, please God!" said my poor devil of a master; and, having finished his scrutiny, he raised the bread to his mouth, and commenced as fierce an attack on it, as I quickly did on the other.

"By heavens! but this bread is beautiful!" exclaimed he; and I, beginning to see how matters stood with him, redoubled my haste with the remainder, being well assured that if he finished first, he would have little hesitation in assisting me; but luckily we finished together. He then carefully picked up the crumbs which had fallen, and entering a small chamber adjoining, brought out an old jar with a broken mouth. Having drunk therefrom he handed it to me, but to support my character of abstemiousness, I excused myself, saying, "No, sir, I thank you; I never drink wine."

"The contents of the jar will not hurt you," he said; "it is only water!"

I took the jar, but a very small draught satisfied me, for thirst was one of the few things from which I suffered no inconvenience.

Thus we remained till night, I anticipating my supper, and my master asking me many questions, to all of which I answered in the best manner I was able. Then he took me into the chamber whence he had brought the jar of water, and said:

"Stay here, my boy, and see how to make this bed, as from henceforth you will have this duty."

We then placed ourselves on each side of this bed, if such it can be called, to make it; though little enough there was to make. On some benches was extended a sort of platform of reeds, on which were placed the clothes, which, from want of washing, were not the whitest in the world. The reeds showed like the ribs of a

lean hog, through an old covering which served to lie upon, and the colour of which one could not exactly praise.

It was night when the bed was made, and my master said, "Lazaro! it is rather late now, and the market is distant; likewise the city abounds with rogues; we had better therefore pass the night as we can, and to-morrow morning we will fare better. Being a single man, you see, I don't care much for these things, but we will arrange better in future."

"Sir, as to myself," I replied, "I beg you will on no account distress yourself. I can pass a night without food with no inconvenience, or even more, indeed, if it were necessary."

"Your health will be all the better for it," he said, "for take my word for it, as I said to-day, nothing in the world will ensure length of life so much as eating little."

"If life is to be purchased on such terms," said I to myself, "I shall never die, for hitherto I have been obliged to keep this rule, whether I will or no; and, God help me, I fear I shall keep it all my long life."

My master then went to bed, putting his clothes under his head, instead of a pillow, and ordered me to seek my rest at his feet; which I accordingly did, though the situation precluded all hope of sleep. The canes, of which the bedstead was composed, and my bones, which were equally prominent, were throughout the night engaged in a continual and most unpleasant intimacy; for considering my illness, and the privations which I had endured, to say nothing of my present starving condition, I do not believe I had a single pound of flesh on my whole body.

Throughout that day I had eaten nothing but a crust of bread, and was actually mad with hunger, which is in itself a bitter enemy to repose. A thousand times did I curse myself and my unhappy fortunes—the Lord forgive my impiety; and what was a sore addition to my misery, I dared not to move, nor vent my grief in audible expressions, for fear of waking my master; many times during this night did I pray to God to finish my existence!

As the morning appeared, we arose, and I set about cleaning my master's clothes and putting them in order; and helped him to dress, very much to his satisfaction. As he placed his sword in his belt he said, "Do you know the value of this weapon, my boy? The gold was never coined that should buy this treasure of me. Of all the blades Antonio ever forged, he never yet made its fellow."

And then drawing it from the scabbard and trying the edge with his fingers, he added, "With this blade I would engage to sever a bale of wool!"—"and I would do more than that with my teeth," said I to myself; "for though they are not made of steel, I would engage to sever a four pound loaf and devour it afterwards."

He then sheathed his sword and girded it round him, and with

an easy, gentlemanlike carriage, bearing himself erect, and throwing the corner of his cloak over his shoulder, or over his arm, placing his right hand on his side, he sallied forth, saying:

"Lazaro, see to the house while I go to hear mass, and make the bed during my absence; the vessel for water wants filling, which you can do at the river which runs close by; though take care to lock the door when you go, lest we should be robbed, and put the key on this hinge, in case I return before you, that I may let myself in."

He then walked up the street with such an air of gentility that a stranger would have taken him for a near relation of the Count of Arcos, or, at least, for his *valet de chambre*.

"Blessed be the Lord!" said I, "who, if he inflicts misfortunes, gives us the means of bearing them. Now who, on meeting my master, would dream but that he had supped well and slept well; and, although early in the morning, but that he had also breakfasted well? There are many secrets, my good master, that you know, and that all the world is ignorant of. Who would not be deceived by that smiling face and that fine cloak? and who would believe that such a fine gentleman had passed the whole of yesterday without any other food than a morsel of bread, that his boy had carried in his breast for a day and a night? To-day washing his hands and face, and, for want of a towel, obliged to dry them with the lining of his garments—no one would ever suspect such things from the appearance before them. Alas! how many are there in this world who voluntarily suffer more for their false idea of honour than they would undergo for their hopes of an hereafter!"

Thus I moralised at the door of our house, while my master paced slowly up the street; and then, returning within, I lost no time in making the tour of the house, which I did, though without making any fresh discovery whatever; or finding anything of a more consolatory nature than my own gloomy thoughts.

I quickly made our bed, such as it was, and taking the water-jar, went with it to the river. There I saw my gay master in one of the gardens by the river-side, in close conversation with two ladies, closely veiled, for there were many who were in the habit of resorting thus early in the morning to enjoy the fresh air, and to take breakfast with some of the gentlemen of the city, who likewise frequented the spot. There he stood between them, saying softer things than Ovid ever did; while they, seeing him apparently so enamoured, made no scruple of hinting their wish to breakfast. Unfortunately his purse was as empty as his heart was full, therefore this attack on his weaker position threw him somewhat suddenly into disorder, which became evident from his confusion of language, and the lame excuses of which he was obliged to avail himself. The ladies were too well experienced not to perceive, and

that quickly, how matters stood; it was not long, therefore, before they exchanged him for a more entertaining gallant.

I was all this time slily munching some cabbage stalks, for want of a better breakfast, which I despatched with considerable alacrity, and then returned home, without being seen by my master, to await his orders respecting breakfast on his return.

I began to think seriously what I should do, still hoping, however, that as the day advanced my master might return with the means to provide at least for our dinner, but in vain. Two o'clock came, but no master; and, as my hunger now became insupportable, without further consideration I locked the door, and, placing the key where I was told, sallied out in search of food. With a humble subdued voice, my hands crossed upon my breast, and the name of the Lord upon my tongue, I went from house to house begging bread. The practice of this art, I may say, I imbibed with my mother's milk; or rather, that having studied it under the greatest master in all Spain, it is no wonder that I was so great an adept in all its various branches.

Suffice it to say, that although in this city there is no more charity than would save a saint from starvation, yet such was my superiority in talent, that before four o'clock I had stowed away nearly four pounds of bread in my empty stomach, and two pounds more in my sleeves and in the inside of my jacket. Passing then by the tripe market, I begged of the women that keep the stalls, who gave me a good-sized piece of cow-heel, with some other pieces of boiled tripe. When I got home, I found my good gentleman already arrived, and having folded and brushed his cloak, he was walking about the courtyard. As I entered, he came up to me, as I thought, to chide me for my absence, but, thank God, it was far otherwise. He inquired where I had been, to which I replied:

"Sir, I remained at home till two o'clock; but when I found that your honour did not return, I went out, and recommended myself so well to the notice of the good people of this city, that they have given me what you see."

I then showed him the bread and the tripe which I had collected. At the sight of these delicacies his countenance brightened up.

"Ah!" said he, "I waited dinner for you some time; but as it grew late I finished. You have nevertheless acted very properly in this matter; for it is much better to ask, for the love of God, than to steal. I only charge you on no account to say you live with me, as such proceedings would not exactly redound to my honour—although I hardly think there is any danger, seeing that I am known so little in this city."

"Do not alarm yourself, sir, on that head," said I, "for people thought as little of asking who was my master as I of telling them."

" Eat away, then, you young rogue," said he, " and with the blessing of God, we shall not have long need of such assistance, though I must say, since I have been in this house, good fortune has never visited me. There are houses, from some reason or other, so unlucky that every one who occupies them becomes infected with their ill-fortune, and this is without doubt one of them; but I promise you that directly the month is up, I will leave, even if they should offer it to me for nothing."

I seated myself on the end of the bench, and commenced my supper with the tripe and bread. My poor unhappy master all the time eyed me askance, and never once took his eyes from my skirts, which at that time served me instead of a dinner-service. Providence had that day so favoured me, that I resolved my master should partake of my abundance, for I could well understand his feelings, having experienced them of old, and to that very day, indeed, I was no stranger to them. I began to think whether it would exactly become me to invite him to my repast, but as he had unfortunately said he had dined, I feared lest he might take it amiss. However, I very much wished that the poor sinner might have the benefit of my labour, and break his fast as he had done the day before, particularly as the food was better, and my hunger less. My good wishes towards him were speedily gratified, as they happened to jump with his own humour, for directly I commenced my meal he began walking up and down the room, and approaching me rather closely.

" Lazaro," said he, " I really cannot help remarking the extreme grace with which you make your meal. I don't think I ever saw any one eat with more natural elegance; certain it is, that observers might benefit by your example."

" Doubtless, my good sir," thought I, " it can only be to your extreme amiability that I am indebted for this compliment." Then, in order to give him the opportunity which I knew he longed for, I said, " Good materials, sir, require good workmen. This bread is most delicious, and this cow-heel is so well cooked and seasoned that the smell alone is sufficient to tempt any one."

" Cow-heel, is it? " said he.

" It is, sir," I replied.

" Ah," said he, " cow's heel is one of the most delicate morsels in the world; there is nothing I am so fond of."

" Then taste it, sir," said I, " and try whether this is as good as you have eaten."

He seated himself on the bench beside me, and laying hands on the cow-heel, with three or four pieces of the whitest bread, commenced in such good earnest that one might easily see his rations were not disagreeable to him—grinding every bone as ravenously as a greyhound.

" With a nice sauce of garlic," said he, " this would be capital eating."

" You eat it with a better sauce than that, my good sir," thought I.

" By heavens," said he, " anybody would think, to see me eat, that I had not touched a morsel to-day."

" I wish I was as sure of good luck as I'm sure of that," said I to myself. He asked me for the water-jug, and I gave it to him, which, by the way, was a sure proof he had eaten nothing, for it was as full as when I brought it from the river. After drinking, we went to bed in the same manner as on the night before, though it must be confessed in a much more contented mood.

Not to dwell too much on this part of my story, I shall only say, that in this manner we passed eight or ten days, my worthy master taking the air every day, in the most frequented parts, with the most perfect ease of a man of fashion, and returning home to feast on the contributions of the charitable, levied by poor Lazaro.

With all this, however, I liked him very much, seeing he had not the ability to do more—in fact, I was much more sorry for his unfortunate condition than angry at the situation in which his deficiencies placed me; and many times I have been reduced to short commons myself that I might bring home a certain share for my unlucky master. But he was poor, and nobody can give what he has not got—an excuse which I cannot make for the old scoundrels I served before,—though as God is my witness, to this very day I never see a gentleman like my master strutting along as though the street was hardly wide enough for him, without marking the singular way in which Fortune apportions her favours.

I pitied him from my heart, to think that with all his apparent greatness he might at that moment suffer privations equally hard to endure. But with all his poverty, I found greater satisfaction in serving him than either of the others, for the reasons I have stated. All that I blamed him for was the extravagance of his pride, which, I thought, might have been somewhat abated towards one who, like myself, knew his circumstances so intimately. It seems to me, however, that the poorest gentlefolk are always the most proud; but there is consolation in the thought that death knows no distinction, but at length most generally places the commoner in higher ground than it does the peer. I lived for some time in the manner I have related, when it pleased my miserable fortune, which seemed never tired with persecuting me, to envy me even my present precarious and unhappy condition.

It appeared that the season in that country had been unfavourable to corn; therefore it was ordained by the magistracy that all strangers who subsisted by alms should quit the city, or risk the punishment of the whip. This law was enforced so rigidly, that only four

days after its promulgation, I beheld a procession of miserable wretches who were suffering the penalty through the streets of the city; a sight which so alarmed me that I did not dare for the future to avail myself of my accustomed means of subsistence.

It can hardly be possible to imagine the extreme necessity to which our house was reduced, or the mournful silence of those who were expiring within; for two or three days we neither spoke a word, nor had we a mouthful to eat. With regard to myself, there were some young women who earned their living by cotton-spinning, and making caps, and with whom, being near neighbours of ours, I had made some slight acquaintanceship; out of their pittance these poor girls gave me a morsel, which just served to keep life within me.

I did not, however, feel my own situation so keenly as I did that of my poor master, who, during the space of eight days, to the best of my knowledge, never touched a mouthful; at least, I can say, the deuce a morsel ever entered our door. Whether he ever got anything to eat when he went out I cannot determine; but I know well, that he sallied out every day with a waist as fine as a greyhound of the best breed; and the better, as he thought to evade suspicion, he would take a straw from the mattress, which could even ill spare the loss, and go swaggering out of the house, sticking it in his mouth for a toothpick! He continued to attribute all his ill-fortune to the unlucky house in which we were lodged.

"The evils we have to bear," he would say, "are all owing to this unfortunate dwelling—as you see, it is indeed sad, dark, and dismal: nevertheless, here we are, and, I fear, must continue awhile to suffer; I only wish the month was past, that we might well be quit of it."

It happened one day, suffering, as I have described, this afflicting persecution of hunger, that by some extraordinary chance, I know not what, nor did I think it dutiful to inquire, there fell into my poor master's poverty-stricken possession the large sum of one real, with which he came home as consequentially as though he had brought the treasure of Venice, saying to me with an air of extreme satisfaction and contentment:

"Here, Lazaro, my boy, take this—Providence is at last beginning to smile on us—go to the market, and purchase bread, meat, and wine; we will no longer take things as we have done. I have other good news, likewise. I have taken another lodging; so that there will be no occasion to remain in this wretched place longer than the end of the month. Curse the place, and he who laid the first brick; by the Lord, since I've been here, not a drop of wine have I drunk, nor have I tasted a morsel of meat, neither have I enjoyed the smallest comfort whatsoever; but everything has been, as you see, miserable and dismal to the last degree. However, go, and quickly, for to-day we will feast like lords."

I took my real and jar, and without another word set out on my errand with the utmost speed, making towards the market-place in the most joyous and light-hearted mood imaginable. But, alas! what enjoyment could I expect, when my adverse fortune so preponderated that the slightest gleam of sunshine in my career was sure to be overtaken by a storm? I was making my way, as I said, in extremely good spirits, revolving in my mind in what manner I should lay out my money to the best advantage, and returning heartfelt thanks to Providence for favouring my master with this unexpected stroke of fortune, when I saw a great crowd at the other end of the street, among whom were many priests; and I soon found to my horror that they were accompanying a corpse.

I stood up against the wall to give them room; and as the body passed I beheld one, who, as I supposed, from the mourning she wore, was the widow of the deceased, surrounded by friends. She was weeping bitterly, and uttering in a loud voice the most piteous exclamations.

" Alas! " she cried, " my dear husband and lord! whither are they taking you? To that miserable and unhappy dwelling! To that dark and dismal habitation! To the house where there is neither eating nor drinking! "

Good heavens! never shall I forget the moment when I heard those words; it seemed in my fright as though heaven and earth were coming together.

" Miserable and unhappy wretch that I am," I exclaimed in an agony of mind, " it is to our house then that they are bearing this body! "

I rushed from the place where I stood, through the crowd, forgetting in my fright the object of my errand, and made with all speed towards home. The instant I arrived I closed the door, barred and bolted it, and cried out to my master with the utmost earnestness of manner to help me to defend the entrance.

He, greatly alarmed, and with the impression that it was something else, called to me, " What is the matter, boy? Why do you slam the door with such fury? "

" Oh, master," said I, " come here and assist me, for they are bringing a dead body here! I met them in the street above, and I heard the widow of the dead man crying out, ' Alas! husband and master, whither do they take you? To the dark and dismal house; to the house of misery and misfortune; to the house where they neither eat nor drink.' To what other house then can they be bringing him than this? "

Directly my master heard these words, albeit in no merry humour, he burst out into such a fit of laughing that it was some time before he could utter a word.

During this time I was holding fast the door, placing my shoulder

against it for better security. The crowd passed with the body; though still I could not persuade myself but that they intended to bring it in. When my master was more satiated with mirth than with food, he said to me in a good-tempered manner:

"It is very just, Lazaro; according to what the widow said, you were right in thinking as you did; but as they have thought better of it, and passed on, open the door and go on your errand."

"Stop a little longer, sir," said I; "let them pass the end of the street, that we may be sure"; but he would not wait, and coming to the street door, he opened it, and forced me away, for I hardly knew what I did, with fright, and so he despatched me again to the market.

We dined well that day, though my appetite was but indifferent; and it was some time before I recovered from the effect of that misadventure, though it was an excellent source of mirth to my master whenever it was brought to his recollection.

In this manner I lived some little time with my third and poorest master, the Esquire; having great curiosity to know what could possibly have induced him to come to that part of the world, for I knew he was a stranger on the first day I lived with him, from the fact of his not knowing a single soul in the city. At last my wish was gratified; for one day, when we had feasted pretty well, and were consequently in good humour, he told me a little of his history. He was a native of Old Castile, and had quitted his country because he had refused to salute a neighbouring gentleman of consequence, by taking off his hat first, which, according to punctilio, was construed into an insulting mark of disrespect.

My honourable master wished to convince me that, being a gentleman, the other, though superior, had an equal right to doff his bonnet to him; "for," said he, "though I am, as you see, but an Esquire, I vow to God if the Count himself were to meet me in the street and did not take off his hat to me, aye, and entirely off, the next time we met I would turn into some shop, pretending business, rather than pay him the least mark of respect. And though you see me here poorly off, yet in my own country I have an estate in houses in good condition, and well rented, only sixteen leagues from the place where I was born, worth at least two hundred thousand maravedis; so you see that they must be of good size and in good repair. I have likewise a dovecot which, if it were taken care of, which it is not, would furnish upwards of two hundred young birds annually; and many other things I possess, which I have relinquished solely because I would not have the slightest imputation cast upon my honour, by yielding precedence to one who was in fact no better than myself; and I came to this city hoping to obtain some honourable employment, though I have not succeeded so well as I could have wished."

In this manner my master was going on with his narrative, giving me an account of the honourable proceedings by which he had suffered, when he was interrupted by the appearance of an old man and woman; the former came to demand the rent of the house, and the latter that of the bed. They brought the account, and claimed for two months more than he could raise in a year; I think it was about twelve or thirteen reales. He answered them very courteously that he was then going out to change a piece of gold, and should return in the evening. But he made his exit this time for good; and when the good people came for their money I was obliged to tell them that he had not yet returned. The night came, but without my master, and being fearful of remaining in the house by myself, I went to our neighbours, to whom I related the circumstances, and they allowed me to remain with them.

Early in the morning the creditors returned, and inquired of the neighbours. The women replied that his boy was there, and the key of the door ready for them. They then asked me about my master, and I told them that I knew not where he was, and that I had not seen him since he went out to change the piece of gold; but that I thought it was most likely he was gone off with the change.

On hearing this news, they sent for a lawyer and a constable, and called on me and others to witness their taking possession of my master's effects in payment of their demands. They went all over the house, and found just as much furniture as I have recounted before, when they demanded of me, "What has become of your master's property? where are his trunks? and where is his household furniture?"

"I'm sure I don't know," I replied.

"Doubtless," said they, "the property has been removed during the night. Señor Alguacil, take that boy into custody; he knows whither it has been taken."

On this up came the alguacil, and seizing me by the collar, said, "Boy, thou art my prisoner, if thou reveal not where thy master hath hid his effects."

I, as if quite new to this sort of thing, expressed the utmost surprise and terror, and promised to state everything I knew, which seemed a little to disarm his anger.

"That is right," exclaimed all, "tell all you know, and fear nothing."

The man of law seated himself at a desk, and desired me to begin.

"Gentlemen," I continued, "my master is in possession of a good stock of houses and an old dovecot."

"So far well," was the reply; "however little worth, it will meet the debt he owes me; in what part of the city do they lie?"

"On his own estate, to be sure," was my answer.

"That is all the better," they exclaimed; "and where is his estate?"

"In Old Castile," I replied, "as he told me."

Both alguacil and notary laughed out at hearing this, exclaiming, "Quite enough—quite enough to cover your claim, though it were even greater."

The neighbours who had gathered round us, now said, "Gentlemen, this here is a very honest boy; he has not been long in the 'squire's service, and knows no more of him than does your worship; the poor little sinner came knocking at our doors, and for charity's sake we gave him something to eat; after which he has gone to sleep at his master's."

Seeing that I was innocent, they let me go free; but the notary and the alguacil now came on the owners for the taxes, which gave rise to no very friendly discussion, and a most hideous din; the man and woman maintained very stoutly that they had neither the will nor the means to pay them. The others declared they had other business in view of more importance; but I left them without stopping to see the issue of the affair, though I believe the unfortunate owner had to pay all, and he well deserved to do it, for when he ought to have taken his ease and pleasure, after a life of labour, he still went on hiring out houses to increase his gains.

It was in this way that my third and poorest master took leave of me, by which it seems I put the seal to my bad fortune, which, while exercising its utmost rigour against me, had this singularity in it, that though most domestics are known to run away from their masters, it was not thus in my case, inasmuch as my master had fairly run away from me.

MATEO ALEMÁN

1547–1610

HOW GUZMAN EXCITED THE COMPASSION OF THE CARDINAL

HAVING roused myself early one fine morning, according to custom, I went and seated myself at the door of a cardinal, concerning whom I had heard an excellent character, being one of the most charitably disposed in Rome. I had taken the trouble of getting one of my legs swelled, on which, notwithstanding what had passed, was to be seen a new ulcer, one that might set at defiance the most penetrating eye or probe of a surgeon.

I had not omitted to have my face as pale as death; and thus, filling the air with horrible lamentations while I was asking alms, I moved the souls of the different domestics who came in and out to take pity upon me; they gave me something; but I was yet only beating up for game—it was their master I wanted. He at length made his appearance—I redoubled my cries and groans—I writhed in anguish; and I then accosted him in these terms:

"Oh! most noble Christian; thou friend of Christ and His afflicted ones! have pity upon me, a poor wretched sinner. Behold me cut down in the flower of my days; may your excellency be touched with my extreme misery, for the sake of the sufferings of our dear Redeemer."

The cardinal, who was really a pious man, stopped; and, after looking at me earnestly, turned to his attendants.

"In the name of Christ, take this unhappy being, and bear him into my own apartments! let the rags that cover him be exchanged for fine linen; put him into a good bed—nay into my own—and I will go into another room. I will tend on him; for in him do I verily see what must have been the sufferings of our Saviour."

He was obeyed; and, oh charity! how didst thou shame those lordly prelates who think Heaven in debt to them, if they do but look down upon some poor wretch: while my good cardinal, not content with what he had done, ordered two surgeons to attend,

recommending them to do all in their power to ease my agony, and to examine and cure my leg; after which they should be well recompensed. He then, bidding me be of good cheer, left me, to pursue his affairs; and the surgeons, to make the best of my case.

They declared at once that it was useless, and that gangrene had already commenced. So seriously did they pronounce this, that, though I knew the effect was solely produced by staining my leg with a certain herb, I almost felt alarmed for the consequences. They then took out their case of instruments, called for a cauldron of hot water, for some fine linen, and a poultice. While these were in preparation, they questioned me as to the origin of my disease, how long I had had it, etc., etc.—moreover, whether I drank wine, and what was my usual diet.

To these, and to a hundred such interrogatories, I replied not a word; so great was my alarm at the terrific processes that appeared to be going on in order to restore me to my pristine health and soundness. I was infinitely perplexed, not knowing to what saint to have recourse; for I was apprehensive there might not be a single one in heaven inclined to interfere in behalf of so thorough-paced a rascal. I recalled to mind the lesson I had so lately been taught at Gaeta, and had my misgivings that I might not escape even on such good terms as I had done there. The surgeons ranked high in their profession; and, after having curiously turned round my leg about twenty times, retired into another room to discuss the result of their observations. I remained in a state of horror not to be described; for it had got into my head that they would decide upon amputation; to learn which I crept softly towards the door to listen, fully resolved to reveal the imposture in so dreadful an alternative.

"Sir," said one, "we may consult here for ever, to little purport; he has got St. Anthony's fire."

"No such thing," replied the other, "he has no more fire in his leg than I have in my hand; we might easily remove it in a couple of days."

"You cannot be serious," said the first speaker. "By St. Comus, I know something of ulcers; and here, I maintain it, we have a gangrene."

"No, no, friend," replied the second, "we have no ulcer—we have a rogue to deal with—nothing is the matter with him I know the whole history of his ulcer, and how it was made. It is by no means very rare; for I know the herbs with which the impostor has prepared it, and the ingenious method in which they have been applied."

The other seemed quite confounded at this assertion; but, ashamed of owning himself a dupe, he persisted in his former opinion: on which a pretty warm colloquy would have ensued, had not the more

ingenious of the two had the sense to recommend first to examine the leg, and to end the dispute afterwards.

"Look a little deeper into the matter," said he, "and you will see the fellow's knavery."

"With all my heart. I will confess you are right, when I see there is no ulcer, or rather gangrene."

"That is not enough," replied his colleague. "In acknowledging your error, you must also admit I am entitled to at least a third more fees than yourself."

"By no means," retorted the other. "I have eyes to detect imposture as well as you; and I am of opinion we ought to divide the good cardinal's fees fairly between us."

The dispute now waxed warm, and rather than give up his point, each declared that he would make the cardinal acquainted with the whole business.

In this dilemma I did not hesitate a moment—there was no time to lose—escape was impossible. I rushed into the presence of the faculty, and threw myself at their feet. With well-dissembled grief I thus addressed them:

"Alas! my dear sirs, take pity upon an unfortunate fellow-creature. Think, gentlemen, 'homo sum; nihil humani,' etc. I am mortal like yourselves—you know the hard-heartedness of the great, and how the poor and forlorn are compelled to assume the most horrible shapes in order to soften their hardness; and in doing this what risks and sufferings do we not encounter, and all for so small a remuneration. Besides, what advantage will you get by exposing such a poor miserable sinner? You will certainly lose your fees, which you need not do if you will let us understand each other. You may rely on my discretion; the fear of consequences will keep me silent, and we may each benefit in our respective professions."

Upon this the men of physic again consulted, and at length came to the resolution of pocketing their fees, "secundum artem." Being all of one mind, we now begged to be ushered into the presence of the cardinal, and the surgeons then ordered me to be placed upon a couch, at the side of which they made an immense display of chirurgical instruments, dressings, etc.—again consulted, and after wrapping my leg in a great number of bandages, they desired that I might be put into a warm bed.

His excellency, meanwhile, was full of anxiety to learn the state of my health, and whether there were any hopes of recovery.

"My lord," replied one of the surgeons, "the patient is in a deplorable situation, gangrene has already begun; still, with time and care, there is a chance that he might recover, please God, but it will be a long affair."

"And he is fortunate," said his coadjutor, "in having fallen

into our hands; another day, and he was lost for ever; but no doubt Providence must have directed him to the door of your excellency."

This account seemed to please the cardinal; it gave him occasion to display the truest Christian charity, and he desired that neither time nor skill might be spared in the endeavour to restore me to health. He also directed that I should be supplied with everything; and the surgeons on their part pledged themselves to do all that art could effect, and each of them to pay me a visit at least twice in the day; it being necessary to detect the slightest change that might occur in my present condition.

They then withdrew, not a little to my consolation; for I could not but regard them, while present, in the light of two executioners, who might fall upon me at any moment, or publish my imposition to the world. So far from this, however, they made me keep my apartment for three months, which to me seemed like so many ages, so difficult is it to give up the habit of gambling—or begging, with the tone of freedom they seem to include. In vain was I daintily lodged and fed, like his excellency himself; the *ennui* I felt was intolerable. I was incessantly beseeching the doctors to take pity on me, and bring the farce to a close, until they were at length compelled to yield to my importunity.

They left off dressing my leg, and, on its being reduced to its natural size, they acquainted the good cardinal with the fact, who was in raptures at the performance, under his auspices, of so great a cure. He rewarded them handsomely, and came to congratulate me on the miraculous event; and having acquitted myself well in his frequent visits to me, in regard both to my opinions and my principles, he imbibed a real kindness for me; and to give me a further proof of it, he gave me the situation of one of his confidential attendants—a species of honour I was too deeply sensible of to be able to refuse.

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

1547–1616

THE PRETENDED AUNT

As two young law-students, natives of La Mancha, were one day passing along the streets of Salamanca, they happened to see over the window of a certain shopkeeper, a rich Persian blind, drawn closely down—a novelty which attracted their attention. Fond of adventure, and more deeply read in the noble science of attack and defence than the laws of Bartolus or Baldus, they felt a strong curiosity to know why the articles the shop contained were kept, being marked on sale, so studiously out of view. Why not exhibited in the window as well as at the door?

To remove their perplexity they proceeded to make inquiries—not at the shop, but at one some little distance off, where they observed a babbling old shopkeeper busily serving his neighbours, and, at the same time, retailing the latest news and scandal of the place. In answer to their questions, he ran on with the same volubility.

"My young gentlemen, you are very inquisitive; but if you must know, there is a foreign lady now resides in that house, at least half a saint, a very pattern of self-denial and austerity, and I wish you were under her direction. She has with her, also, a young lady of extraordinary fine appearance and great spirit, who is said to be her niece. She never goes out without an old squire and two old duennas, young gentlemen; and, as I think, they are a family from Granada, rich, proud, and fond of retirement. At least, I have not seen a single soul in our city (and I have watched them well) once pay them a visit. Nor can I, for the life of me, learn from what place they last came hither. But what I do know is, that the young lady is very handsome and very respectable to all appearance; and from the style of living and high bearing of the aunt, they belong to none of the common sort, of that I am sure."

From this account, pronounced with no little emphasis and authority by the garrulous old gentleman, the students became more eager than ever to follow up their adventure. Familiar as they were with the topographical position of the good citizens, the names of the different families and dwellings, and all the flying reports of

the day, they were still in the dark as to the real quality of the fair strangers and their connections in the University.

By dint of industry and perseverance, however, they hoped soon to clear up their doubts, and the first thing they ascertained was that, though past the hour of noon, the door of the mansion was still closed, and there seemed no admittance even upon business. From this they naturally inferred that, if no tradesmen were admitted, the family could not well take their meals at home; and that if, like other mortals, they ate at all, they must soon make their appearance on their way to dinner.

In this conjecture they were not deceived, for shortly they saw a staid and reverend-looking lady issue from the dwelling, arrayed all in white, with an immense surplice, wider than a Portuguese canon's, extending over her head, close bound round her temples, and leaving only just space enough for her to breathe. Her fan was in her hand, and a huge rosary with innumerable beads and bells about her neck—so large indeed, that, like those of Santinuflo, they reached down to her waist. Her mantle was of fine silk trimmed with furs; her gloves of the whitest and newest, without a fold; and she had a walking-stick, or rather an Indian cane, delicately wrought and tipped with silver.

A venerable old squire, who seemed to have belonged to the times of Count Fernan Gonzales, escorted his honoured mistress on the left hand. He was dressed in a large wide coat of velvet stuff without any trimming—ancient scarlet breeches—Moorish hose—a cloak trimmed with bands—and a cap of strong netted wool, which produced rather a quizzical effect, but which he wore because he was subject to cold and a dizziness in the head; add to which a large shoulder-belt and an old Navarrese sword.

These respectable-looking personages were preceded by another of very different exterior, namely, the lady's niece, apparently about eighteen, graceful in her deportment, and of a grave but gracious aspect. Her countenance was rather of the oval—beautiful and intelligent; her eyes were large and black as jet, not without a certain expression of tenderness and languor; arched and finely marked eyebrows, long dark eyelashes, and on her cheeks a delicate glow of carnation. Her tresses, of a bright auburn, flowed in graceful curls round brows of snowy whiteness, combined with a fine delicate complexion, etc., etc.; and she had on a sarcenet mantle; a bodice of Flemish stuff; her sandals were of black velvet, enriched with gilt fastenings and silver fringe; fine scented gloves, not only fragrant with common essence, but with the richest amber.

Though her demeanour was grave, her step was light and easy: in each particular she appeared to advantage, and in her *tout ensemble* still more attractive. In the eyes of the young scholars she appeared little less than a goddess, and, with half the dazzling

charms she boasted, would have riveted her fetters on the hearts of older and more experienced admirers. As it was, they were completely taken by surprise—astonished, stupefied, overwhelmed, and enchanted. They stood gazing at so much elegance and beauty as if their wits had left them; it being one of the prerogatives of beauty, like the fascination of the serpent, first to deprive its victims of their senses, and then to devour them.

Behind this paragon of perfection walked two ugly old duennas (like maids-of-honour), arrayed, if we only allow for their sex, much in the obsolete manner of their knight companion, the ancient squire.

With this formal and imposing escort, the venerable chaperon at length arrived at the house—the good squire took his station at the door, and the whole party made their entry. As they passed in, the young students doffed their caps with extraordinary alacrity and politeness, displaying in their air and manner as much modesty and respect as they could muster for the occasion.

The ladies, however, took no notice of them, shutting themselves in, and the young gentlemen out: who were left quite pensive and half in love, standing in the middle of the street. From this want of courtesy they ingeniously came to the conclusion that these fair disturbers of their peace had not come to Salamanca for the purpose of studying the laws of politeness, but studying how to break them. In spite, however, of their ingratitude, they agreed to return good for evil, and to treat them on the following night to a little concert of music, in the form of a serenade—for this is the first and only service which poor students have it in their power to offer at the windows of her who may have smitten them.

Seeking some solace, however, for their disappointment just at present, they repaired to a restaurateur's; and having partaken of what little they could get, they next betook themselves to the chambers of some of their friends. There they made a collection of all the instruments of musical torture they could find, such as old wire-worn guitars, broken violins, lutes, flutes, and castanets; for each of which they provided suitable performers, who had at least one eye, an arm, and a leg among them.

Not content, however, with this, being determined to get everything up in the most original style, they sent a deputation to a poet, with a request that he would forthwith compose a sonnet. This sonnet was to be written for, and precisely upon, the name of *Esperanza*, such being the Christian appellation of the hope of their lives and loves; and it was to be sung aloud on that very same night. The poet undertook the serious charge; and in no little while, by dint of biting his lips and nails, and rubbing his forehead, he manufactured a sonnet, weaving with his wits just as an operative would weave a piece of cloth.

This he handed to the young lovers; they approved it, and took the author along with them to repeat it to the musicians as they sung it, there being no time to commit it to memory.

Meantime the eventful night approached—and at the due hour there assembled for the solemn festival nine knights of the cleaver, four vocal performers with their guitars, one psaltery, one harper, one fiddler, twelve bell-ringers, thirty shield-sounders, and numerous other practitioners, divided into several companies; all, however, better skilled in the music of the knife and fork than in any other instrument. In full concert they struck up on entering the street, and a fresh peal on arriving at the lady's house, the last of which made so hideous a din as to rouse all within hearing from their quiet slumbers, and bring them to their windows half dead with wonder and alarm.

This was continued some time just under the lady's window, till the general concert ceased, to give room for the harp and the recital of the poet's sonnet. This was sung by one of those musicians who never wait to be invoked; nor was the poet less on the alert as prompter on the occasion. It was given with extreme sweetness and harmony of voice, and quite accorded with the rest of the performance.

Hardly had the recitation of this wonderful production ceased, when a cunning rogue among the audience, turning to one of his companions, exclaimed in a loud, clear voice:

"I vow to Heaven I never heard a viler song worse sung in all my born days! Did you note well the harmony of the lines, and that exquisite adaptation of the lady's name; that fine invocation to Cupid, and the pretty mention of the age of the adored object—the contrast then between the giant and the dwarf—the malediction—the imprecation—the sonorous march of the whole poem. I vow to God that if I had the pleasure of knowing the author I would willingly, to-morrow morning, send him a dozen pork sausages, for I have this very day received some from the country."

At the word sausages, the spectators were convinced that the person who had just pronounced the encomium meant it in ridicule; and they were not mistaken; for they afterwards learnt that he came from a place famous for its practical jokers, which stamped him in the opinion of the bystanders for a great critic, well qualified to pass judgment upon poets, as his witty analysis of this precious morsel had shown.

Notwithstanding all their endeavours, the windows of the house they were serenading seemed the only ones that remained closed, a circumstance at which our young adventurers were not a little disappointed. Still, however, they persevered; the guitars were again heard, accompanied by three voices, in a romantic ballad chosen for the occasion. The musicians had not proceeded far

before they heard a window opened, and one of the duennas whom they had before seen made her appearance. In a whining hypocritical tone she addressed the serenaders:

"Gentlemen, my mistress, the Lady Claudia di Astudillo y Quinones, requests that you will instantly repair to some other quarter, and not bring down scandal upon this respectable neighbourhood by such violent uproar; more particularly as there is now at her house a young lady, her niece, my young mistress, Lady Esperanza di Torralva Meneses y Pachico. It is very improper, therefore, to create such a disturbance among people of their quality. You must have recourse to other means, of a more gentlemanly kind, if you expect to meet with a favourable reception."

On hearing these words, one of the young gallants quickly retorted, "Do me the favour, most venerable mistress, to request your honoured Lady Donna Esperanza to gladden our eyes by presenting herself at the window. I wish to say a few words, which may prove of the greatest consequence."

"Oh, shocking!" exclaimed the duenna. "Is it the Lady Esperanza you mean? You must know, my good sir, she is not thus lightly to be spoken of—she is a most honourable, exemplary, discreet, modest young person, and would not comply with such an extravagant request, though you were to offer her all the pearls of the Indies."

During this colloquy with the ancient duenna, there came a number of people from the next street; and the musicians, thinking the alguacils were at hand, sounded a retreat, placing the baggage of the company in the centre; they then struck up some martial sounds with the help of their shields, in the hope that the captain would hardly like to accompany them with the sword dance, as is the custom at the holy feast of San Fernando at Seville, but would prefer passing on quietly to risking a defeat in the presence of his emissaries.

They therefore stood their ground for the purpose of completing their night's adventure; but one of the two masters of the revels refused to give them any more music unless the young lady would consent to appear at the window. But not even the old duenna again honoured them with her presence there, notwithstanding their repeated solicitations, a species of slight which threw the whole company into a rage, and almost incited them to make an attack upon the Persian blind, and bring their fair foes to terms. Mortified as they were, they still continued their serenade, and at length took their leave with such a volley of discordant sounds as to make the very houses shake with their hideous din.

It was near dawn before the honourable company broke up, to the extreme annoyance and disappointment of the students at the

little effect their musical treat seemed to have produced. Almost at their wits' end, they at last hit upon the expedient of referring their difficulties to the judgment of a certain cavalier, in whom they thought they could confide. He was one of that high-spirited class termed in Salamanca *los generosos*.

He was young, rich, and extravagant, fond of music, gallant, and a great admirer of bold adventures; in short, the right sort of advocate in a cause like theirs. To him they recounted very minutely their prodigious exertions and their ill-success; the extreme beauty, grace, and attractions of the young, and the imposing and splendid deportment of the old lady; ending with the small hope they had of ever becoming better acquainted with them. Music, it was found, boasted no charm for them, " charmed they ever so wisely "; nay, they had been accused of bringing scandal upon the whole neighbourhood.

Now their friend the cavalier, being one who never blinked danger, began to reassure them, and promised that he would soon bring their uncourteous foes to conditions, *coûte que coûte*; and that, as he was himself armed against the keenest shafts of the little archer-god, he would gladly undertake the conquest of this proud beauty on their account.

Accordingly, that very day he despatched a handsome and substantial present to the lady-aunt, with his best services; at the same time offering all he was worth—life, his person, his goods and chattels, and—his compliments. Such an offer not occurring every day, the elder duenna took on her the part of the Lady Claudia, and, in her mistress's name, was curious to hear from the page something of the rank, fortune, and qualifications of his master. She inquired especially as to his connections, his engagements, and the nature of his pursuits, just as if she were going to take him for a son-in-law. The page told her everything he knew, and the pretended aunt seemed tolerably well satisfied with his story.

It was not long ere she went, in person, in her mistress's name, as the old duenna, with an answer to the young cavalier, so full and precise, that it resembled an embassy rather than a letter of thanks. The duenna arrived, and proceeded to open the negotiation; she was received by the cavalier with great courtesy. He bade her be seated in a chair near his own; he took off her cloak with his own hands, and handed her a fine embroidered handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from her brow, for she seemed a little fatigued with her walk. He did more; and before permitting her to say a single word on the nature of her errand, he ordered sweetmeats and other delicacies to be set before her, and helped her to them himself. He then poured out two glasses of exquisitely flavoured wine, one for her and one for himself. In short, so delicate and flattering were his attentions, that the venerable guar-

dian of youthful virtue could not have received more genuine pleasure if she had been made a saint upon the spot.

She now opened the object of her embassy with the most choice, demure, and hypocritical set of phrases she could command, though ending with a most flat falsehood to the following purport:

"She was commissioned," she said, "by her excellent young mistress, Donna Esperanza di Torralva Meneses y Pachico, to present to his excellency her best compliments and thanks. That his excellency might depend that, though a lady of the strictest virtue, Donna Esperanza would never refuse to receive so excellent and accomplished a gentleman upon an honourable footing, whenever he were inclined to honour her aunt's house with his presence."

The cavalier replied "that he had the most perfect faith in all he had heard respecting the surpassing beauty, virtue, and accomplishments of her young mistress, qualities which made him only the more eager to enjoy the honour of an interview."

After an infinite variety of reservations and circumlocutions this proposal was acceded to by the good duenna, who assured him there could be no possible objections on the part of either of the ladies, an assertion than which, however, nothing could be farther from the truth. In short, desirous of discharging her duennal duty in the strictest manner, and not content with intercepting the cavalier's presents, and personating Donna Claudia, the wily old lady resolved to turn the affair to still further account. She ended the interview, therefore, with assuring him that she would, that very evening, introduce him to the ladies; and first, to the beautiful Esperanza, before her aunt should be informed of his arrival.

Delighted with his success, the young cavalier dismissed his obliging guest with every expression of esteem, and with the highest compliments to her fair mistress; at the same time putting a purse into the old duenna's hand, enough to purchase a whole wardrobe of fine clothes.

"Simple young man," muttered the cunning old lady, as she left the house; "he thinks it is all finely managed now; but I must touch a little more of his money; he has certainly more than he knows what to do with. It is all right; he shall be welcome to my lady's house, truly; but how will he go out again, I wonder. The officers will see him home, I dare say, but not till after he has paid me well again for being admitted; and my young lady has made me a present of some handsome gowns for introducing so pretty a young gentleman; and her foolish old aunt rewarded me well for discovering the secret."

Meantime, the young cavalier was impatiently expecting the appointed hour; and as there is none but sooner or later must arrive, he then took his hat and cloak, and proceeded where the ancient duenna was expecting him.

On his arrival she nodded to him out of a window, and having caught his eye, she threw him the empty purse he had presented her with, well filled, in the morning. Don Felix was at no loss to take the hint, and on approaching the door, he found it only a little open, and the claws of the old beldame ready to clutch the offered bait before she granted him admittance. It was then opened wide, and she conducted him in silence upstairs, and through a suite of rooms into an elegant little boudoir, where she concealed him behind a Persian screen, in a very skilful and cautious manner. She bade him remain quite still; her young lady, Esperanza, was informed of his arrival, and from *her* favourable representation of his high rank, fortune, and accomplishments, she was prepared to give him an interview, even without consulting her aunt. Then giving her hand as a token of her fidelity, she left Don Felix couched behind the screen, in anxious expectation of the result.

Meanwhile, the artful old wretch, under the strictest promise of secrecy, and a handsome present of new gowns, had communicated to the aunt the important intelligence of the discovery of so unpleasant an affair, relating to the unsullied reputation and high character of her niece. She then whispered her mistress in the ear that she had actually discovered a man concealed in the house, and what was worse, by appointment with her young lady, as she had learnt from a note she had intercepted; but that she dared not disturb the intruder, as he appeared armed at all points. She therefore entreated her mistress to make no noise, lest he should perpetrate some deadly deed before the officers of justice, to whom she had sent notice, should arrive to secure him.

Now the whole of this statement was a new tissue of lies, as the old beldame intended to let the cavalier very quietly out, and had never yet ventured to acquaint her young lady with his presence at all. Having thus carried her point with the old lady, she declared that if she would promise to stay without disturbing herself in that room, she would go in search of Esperanza, and conduct her to her aunt immediately. This being agreed upon, the duenna proceeded to look for her young lady upstairs, and was not a little puzzled to find her seated in her boudoir, and Don Felix near her, with an expression of the utmost pleasure and surprise in his countenance.

What had been his astonishment on Esperanza's entrance, to behold the beloved girl from whom he had been separated by her aunt's cruelty not many months before. What an ecstatic meeting for both; what a dilemma for the treacherous old duenna, should an explanation have already taken place! She had not been many weeks in the Lady Claudia's service, and she would certainly not be many more if the lovers should be thus discovered together.

What was to be done? Ere they could decide, her mistress's step was heard on the stairs; she was calling Esperanza in those

sharp, bitter tones to which her niece was too well accustomed, and she had already reached the ante-room ere Don Felix was safely ensconced behind the screen. Esperanza hastened towards her, and found her seated in an easy arm-chair, in a sad flurry of mingled rage and alarm.

She cast ominous and perturbed glances towards the boudoir whence her niece had just issued, and then looked out of the window, impatient for the arrival of the police. She did not venture to allude to the cause of her dismay; bidding her niece sit down, a portentous silence ensued. It was now late, the whole household, even their protector, the ancient squire, had retired to rest. Only the old duenna and her young mistress were wide awake, and the latter was particularly anxious for her aunt to retire. Though only nine, she declared she believed the clock had struck ten; she thought her aunt looked jaded and unwell; would she not like to go to bed? No reply; but dark, malignant glances sufficiently attested what it would have been had she dared to speak out. Though unable, however, to deal in particulars, she could not refrain from making some general observations which bore upon the case.

In a low tone, therefore, she addressed her niece as follows: "I have often enough warned you, Esperanza, not to lose sight of the exhortations I have invariably made it my business to give you. If you valued them as you ought, they would be of infinite use to you, as I fear time and experience will, ere long, sufficiently show"; and here she again looked out of the window.

"You must not flatter yourself we are now at Placentia, where you were born; nor yet at Zamora, where you were educated; no, nor at Toro, where you were first introduced. The people of those places are very different from what they are here; there are no scandals, no jealousies, no intriguing, my dear; and (in a still lower tone) no violence and uproar such as we heard in the street last night. Heaven protect us from all violent and deceitful men; from all house-breaking, robbery, and assassinations. Yes, I say, I wish we were well out of Salamanca! You ought to be aware in what a place you are; they call it the mother of sciences, but I think it is the mother of all mischief; yes, of everything bad, not excepting some people whom I know; but I mention no names just now," she added, with a look of suppressed malice and vexation; "though I could if I pleased. But the time will come!" and she here muttered some low unintelligible threats about grates and convents. "We must leave this place, my dear; you perhaps don't know there are ten or twelve thousand students here, young, impudent, abandoned, lost, predestined, shameless, graceless, diabolical, and mischievous wretches, the scum of all parts of the world, and addicted to all evil courses, as I think we had pretty

good proof only last night. Though avaricious as misers, when they set their eyes upon a young woman, my dear, they can be extravagant enough. The Lord protect us from all such, I say! Jesu Maria save us from them all! ''

During this bitter moral lecture, Esperanza kept her eyes fixed upon the floor, without speaking a word, and apparently quite resigned and obedient, though without producing its due effect upon her aunt. '' Hold up your head, child, and leave off stirring the fire; hold up your head and look me in the face, if you are not ashamed, and try to keep your eyes open, and attend to what I say. You require all the senses you have got, depend upon it, to make good use of my advice; I know you do.''

Esperanza here ventured to put in a word: '' Pray, dear aunt, don't so fret yourself and me by troubling yourself to say any more. I know all you would say, and my head aches shockingly—do spare yourself, or I think my head will split with pain.''

'' It would be broken with something else, perhaps, if you had your deserts, young miss, to answer your affectionate aunt in such a way as that! To say nothing of what I know—yes, what I know, and what others shall know, when somebody comes ''; and she glanced very significantly towards the door.

Of this edifying conversation Don Felix had partly the benefit, as it occurred so near his place of concealment. The old duenna, meantime, being desirous, after the discovery that had taken place, of ingratiating herself with the lovers, and finding there was no hope of Donna Claudia retiring to rest till the arrival of the police, thought it high time to bring the young cavalier out of his dilemma. It was her object to get him safe out of the house, and yet preserve the good opinion of her venerable mistress, who might wait, she thought, till doomsday for the police.

As it was impossible to speak to Don Felix, she hit upon the following expedient to make him speak for himself, trusting to her own and her young lady's discretion for bringing him off safely. She took her snuff-box, and approaching his hiding-place very slyly, threw a good handful into his face, which taking almost immediate effect, he began to sneeze with such a tremendous noise that he might be heard in the street.

She then rushed, in apparent alarm, into the next room, crying out: '' He is coming! he is here;—guns and pistols—pistols and guns—save yourselves, my dear ladies! Here, you go into this closet ''; she pushed the old aunt into it, almost dead with fright, and closed the door. '' You come with me,'' she continued to Esperanza, '' and I will see you safe here.'' Saying which, she took the young lady with her, and joined her lover, who had already found his way downstairs.

Unluckily, however, to make the scene more complete, and to

impose the better upon her old mistress, she opened the window, and began to call out, "Thieves! thieves! help! help!" though in as subdued a tone as possible.

But at the very first cry, the corregidor, who happened to be walking close to the house, entered the door, followed by two of his myrmidons, just as Don Felix opened it to go out. They instantly pounced upon and secured him before he had time either to explain or defend himself, and, spite of the entreaties of Esperanza and the duenna, he was borne away.

They followed, however, to represent the affair to the chief alguacil; and they had gone only a little way when they were met by a strong party, headed by the identical two students, who came prepared for a fresh serenade, on the strength of their friend the cavalier's support and assistance. What was their surprise and dismay to behold him in such hands, and followed by the lovely Esperanza herself, the cause of all their anxiety and exertions.

Love and honour at once fired their breasts, and their resolution was taken in a moment. Six friends, and an army of musicians, were behind them. Turning to them, out flew their own swords, as they called on them to draw in aid of honour and beauty, and rescue them from the hands of the vile alguacils. All united in the cry of rescue—the musicians in the rear struck up the din of war; and a hideous peal it was—while the rest rushed on with as much haste and spirit as if they had been going to a rich banquet. The combat was not long doubtful; the emissaries of justice were overpowered by the mere weight of the crowd which bore upon them; and unable to stir either hand or foot, they were mingled in the thick of the engagement, pressed on all sides by halt, and maimed, and blind, and stunned with the din of battle from the rear.

While this continued, Don Felix and his fair companion had been the especial care of the students and their friends, by whom they had been early drawn off into a place of comparative safety. Here a curious scene took place:—After the first congratulations upon their victory, the two students took their friend Don Felix by the hand, expressing the deep gratitude they both felt for the eternal obligation he had conferred upon them, having so nobly redeemed his pledge of bringing the lady to terms, and placing her in their hands.

The speaker then continued that *he*, having had the good fortune to bear her away in safety from the crowd, was justly entitled to the prize, which he hoped would not be disputed, as he was then ready to meet any rival. The other instantly accepted the challenge, declaring he would die sooner than consent to any such arrangement. The fair object of their strife looked at Don Felix, uttering exclamations of mingled terror and surprise, while the

young cavalier, just as the students were proceeding to unsheath their weapons, burst into a fit of uncontrollable mirth.

"Oh, miracle of love! mighty power of Cupid!" he exclaimed. "What is it I behold? Two such sworn friends to be thus metamorphosed in a moment! Going to fight; after I have so nobly achieved the undertaking! Never,—I am the man you must both run through the body, for verily I am about to forfeit my pledge. I, too, am in love with this lady; and with Heaven's permission and her own, to-morrow she will be mine—my own wedded wife; for, by Heaven! she returns no more to Aunt Claudia and her duennas."

He then explained to the astonished students the story of their love; how, when, and wherefore they had wooed—their separation and sufferings—with the happy adventure that had crowned their hopes. Then, imitating the language of the students, he took their hands, assuring them of his deep gratitude for the eternal obligation they had conferred upon him.

On the ensuing day, Esperanza gave her hand to Don Felix, and the venerable Aunt Claudia was released from her hiding-place and all further anxiety on her niece's account.

FRANCISCO DE QUEVEDO

1580–1645

THE VISION OF THE CATCH-POLE POSSESSED

On going the other day to hear mass, at a convent in this town, I found the doors closed, and a world of good people pressing and praying to get in. Upon inquiring what was the matter, they told me there was a demoniac about to be exorcised, which made me the more eager to see the ceremony; but all to no purpose, for after having been nearly stifled in the crowd, I was glad to make my escape, and betake myself once more to my lodgings.

As I went, I met a particular friend of mine at the end of the street, belonging to the same convent, who gave me the same information. Observing my curiosity, he told me to follow him, and having a general passport, he took me through a little door at the back of the church into the vestry. Here we found a miserable, dogged-looking fellow, with a fur tippet round his neck, as slovenly as any beggar you meet—all in rags and tatters, his hands bound, and stamping and roaring in a most horrible manner.

"Bless me!" I exclaimed, crossing myself, "what is all this?"

"This," replied the good father, who was to expel the devil—"this is a man possessed with an evil spirit."

"That's an infernal lie," cried the demon that tormented him; "with all respect to the present company, it is not a man possessed with a devil, but a devil possessed with a man! You ought to take care what you say, for it is quite evident, from both the question and answer, that you are little better than a set of fools. Know that we devils never get possession of the body of an alguacil if we can help it; it is in spite of ourselves if we do. To speak correctly, therefore, say that you have here a devil *catch-poled,* and not a *catchpole* possessed. To give you your due, you men can outwit us devils better than you do the catchpoles, for we take fright at the cross, while they make use of it as a cloak for their wicked purposes.

"Still, while we thus differ in our humour, we are much of a mind in regard to the duties we have to fulfil; for if we bring men into judgment and tribulation, so do the bailiffs; we pray for the

progress of vice and all its societies, and so do they; in fact, they are the more zealous of the two, because they make a livelihood by it, and we only for the sake of company. Here you see the catchpoles are worse than the devils, for they are bent upon devouring their own species. We are angels, though black ones, compared with them, and were only changed into imps for setting ourselves upon an equality with the Most High. The generation of catchpoles live, like worms, upon corruption; so you may as well leave off, my good father, plying this wretch with beads and reliques—you will sooner snatch a soul from damnation than anything out of his clutches. In short, your catchpoles and we devils belong both to the same order, only we are of the *barefoot,* like the reverend father (having a hard footing in the world), while they go warm shod—both shoes and stockings."

I was rather astonished to find so great a sophist in the devil; but, spite of all, the holy man persisted in his exorcism, and to stop the demon's mouth, he washed his face in some holy water, so that the demoniac became ten times madder than before. He began to howl so horribly as to deafen the whole company, and make the floor tremble.

"Perhaps," he exclaimed, "you think all this the effect of your holy water; no such thing; the pure element itself would have done as much; for a catchpole hates nothing so much as cold water. They may well be called alguacils, from Pagan descent; and as so much more suitable to their behaviour."

"Come, come," retorted the good father, "we must not listen to this villain; give his tongue free scope, and you will hear him revile the government, and the ministers of justice themselves, because they keep the world in order, and put down villainy—all which goes to spoil his own market."

"Chop me none of your logic, old fool," replied the devil, "for there is more in our philosophy than you are aware of; but if you like to do a poor devil a good turn, be quick and give me my *exit* out of this accursed bumbailiff. Were I not a devil of some rank and reputation, I should be better able to endure the scoffs and taunts that will welcome my return back for keeping such sorry company."

"You shall leave it this very day," cried the holy father; "in pity to this tormented wretch, I will expel thee, spite of thy infernal obstinacy; wilt thou persist in torturing him, I say?"

"It is nothing," returned the devil, "but a trial between us which shall prove the greater devil of the two."

The priest did not in the least relish these keen and wicked replies, which turned the laugh against him; but to me it was very amusing; and addressing myself to the good father, I said:

"We are all friends, I believe, here, and I wish you would let

me put a few questions to this merry demon; I may be able, perhaps, to get something good out of him, even against his will, if you will just stop his hand a little on this poor wretch."

The exorcist granted my request, and the merry devil resumed with a laugh:

"We shall never, I see, want a friend at court while a poet resides there; and it would be very ungrateful in the whole race if we did, after the treatment they have experienced from us below."

"Have you many?" inquired I.

"Whole lots," he replied; "and there is nothing so pleasant as the first year of a poet's novitiate; he brings letters of recommendation for our ministers, and inquires for Rhadamanthus, Charon, Cerebus, Minos, etc., etc., with a grave face."

"What punishment do you inflict?" I asked, rather anxiously.

"A great deal, and of a very proper kind," he replied. "We praise the works of their rivals; some are employed for a thousand years in revising a few hackneyed stanzas upon jealousy; others beat their heads with their empty palms, or bore their noses with a hot iron to get a new thought. They split a hair, and torture a word into every absurd complication of sound; they bite their nails, or stand transfixed in a brown study. But your comic poets fare the worst, for the villainous tricks they play upon the stage in coupling high-born ladies with clowns and lackeys, and princes and nobles with the refuse of the other sex. We do not find room for these satiric wits along with the others, but with pettifoggers, and common dealers in the arts of shuffling, cheating, and forging.

"As to the discipline employed, those who come, for instance, by the way of fools, we place among the astrologers; a man condemned for manslaughter finds his seat among the physicians; merchants who have negotiated a vile business take their chance with Judas; and corrupt ministers of every class pitch their tents close to those of the great robbers of the earth. A certain dealer, who declared he had lived upon the immaculate sale of cold water, took up his station with his friends the publicans. Indeed, the whole of our kingdom is divided into separate districts, to accommodate all classes of colonists. The blind, who would fain rank with the poets, we include among the lovers; a sexton, and a cook who roasted cats for hares, we send to the pastry shop."

"And have you many lovers," I inquired, "in your dominions?"

"Marry! that we have; and all are great admirers of themselves; some busied with their money, some with their own discourses, others with their own works; but very rarely one that can be said to like his own wife. No wonder, indeed; for the women generally bring them to the stool of repentance, and then the devil may take his own way. But for true sport, give me your fashionable, genteel

lovers—your men of colours and favours—so trimmed and laced as to make a most admirable sign for the tailor or the mercer. Some you would mistake for carriers, bending under the burden of love-letters; some are horned, some flaming like comets; and best of all to behold are the antics of your maiden lover, with open mouth, and hands extended, embracing the air for his visionary mistress.

"There are also a kind of empty-handed, befooled pretenders, ever on the watch, snatching at the shadow, but who can never reach the substance; while some, worse than these, condemn themselves for ever for a Judas kiss. One storey lower is the asylum of contented cuckolds, a rank poisonous place, strewed with the relics of reputation and paved with horns. But, resigned to their sorry destiny, the inhabitants never so much as question the justice of the sentence to which they are doomed; but far more difficult to keep in order are the admirers of old women, who occupy the adjoining apartment, whose luxury and depravity of taste are consigned to perpetual bondage.

"To leave all this, let me give you a word of advice—not to persist in making caricatures of us devils in your shows and pictures, if you wish me to indulge your curiosity. Why should you give us claws and talons like a vulture or a griffin—why tails—why saucer eyes and horns—nay, why even crowned with a coxcomb? You might take us for hermits, philosophers, or corregidores! Think better of it; paint us as we are; and one good turn will bring another. The other day we had Geronimo Bosco with us; and on inquiring what had led him to make such frightful representations of us in his visions, he made answer, it was because he had never really believed that there were demons, though he now found that it was but too true.

"What we consider still worse, is the usual style of your discourse when you wish to reflect upon any one's ill behaviour; as, for instance, 'See how this devil of a tailor has spoiled my coat; how this devil of a fellow has made me wait; and how this devil of a rascal has taken me in!' all which is very unhandsome, thus to rank us with the scum of mankind. Tailors, indeed! a set of wretches that serve us for fuel, and who are obliged to beg hard for the honour of being burnt! You have another bad custom, too, of giving everything to the devil which you do not like yourselves: as, 'the devil take it; go to the devil; and the devil give you good of it'; as if he had nothing else to do than to take possession of what you choose to give him; if they are so ready, let them come themselves, and depend upon receiving a hearty welcome."

In the same strain the devil rambled on some time, when suddenly was heard a scuffle which had befallen between two conceited coxcombs about a point of precedence. On turning to look, I be-

held some objects in the distance that appeared to carry something in the shape of crowns.

"Are there kings in hell?" I inquired; and the demon satisfied my doubts by observing that it abounded with them; some condemned to subjection under those whom they had oppressed—some for extreme cruelty, and desolating their kingdoms in a way more terrific than the great plague. Others are expiating their avarice, for making deserts of populous villages and smiling plains; while many find their way thither by means of corrupt ministers, more base and cruel than themselves. It is delightful to see them suffer; and their torments are redoubled, inasmuch as they most frequently bring half their kingdom with them, bringing down upon the world universal ruin.

"It is thus, then, that kings find themselves a royal road to perdition, while your great merchants reach it by a bridge of silver. Next to these, I may mention your judges!"

"What, are there judges there?"

"Are there!" returned the demon, "why, the judges are like game to our palates—the choice morsels—the most prolific fish that supply our great lake; for what are the bailiffs, the proctors, barristers, attorneys, and clerks, that arrive every day in shoals, but the fry from these mighty judges; and sometimes, in a lucky season for cheating, perjury, and forgery, we are so full that we can nowhere find room for our guests."

"What! would you say that there is no justice on the face of the earth?" I inquired.

"I do," replied the devil; "and if you will listen, I will tell you, if you have never heard the story."

"I have not," was the answer.

"Then open your ears, and here you have it," retorted the devil with a smile. "Once, in days gone by, Truth and Justice happened to meet in their peregrinations over the earth; the one was naked, the other was very frank, and sour of aspect; and neither found the least hospitality or good reception in any quarter. After wandering about miserably in the open air, Truth was compelled to take up a lodging with a mute; and Justice, seeing that her name was generally used as a cloak for villainy, and that she was held in no regard, made up her mind to return to heaven. She took her departure from the great courts and cities and went into the country, where she met with some simple villagers, who afforded her the best entertainment in their power; but malice and persecution still followed her, and she was driven even thence. She then resorted to many other places, and people everywhere asked her who she was. She told them plainly she was Justice; for she would not tell an untruth. 'Justice!' they all cried, 'she is an entire stranger to us—there's nothing for her here—go, shut the

door!' After this wretched reception on earth, she indignantly took wing and returned to her native heaven, without so much as leaving even a trace of the path by which she had passed.

"The fame of her name, however, did not become extinct; and we still behold her depicted with the sceptre of power in her hands, while she is, moreover, called Justice. But let us call her by what name we will, it is in her name the fires are kindled in the realms below; and the sleights of hand performed under her disguise surpass everything to be achieved by the most accomplished jilts, rogues, pick-pockets, or cut-throats in this wide world; in short, the power of avarice has reached such a height as to bid defiance to all other passions, and to absorb the whole faculties of body and soul in schemes of imposture and plunder. First in the list of iniquity, does not the seducer, under the pretence of her consent, steal the honour of her he vows to love? Does not the attorney dive into your pockets, and show both a law and a rule for it? the comedians run away with your time as well as your money, while contriving to live on the recitation of other men's productions? Love outwits you with his eyes; the orator with his tongue; the soldier keeps you at arm's length; the musician beguiles you with his voice and fingers; the astrologer puzzles you with his calculations; the apothecary sickens you with his drugs; the leech draws your blood; and the physician finally bids you take your exit.

"Now in some way or other, these characters all belong to the great class of impostors; but it is the catchpole who combines all; and, in the name of justice, imposes upon and oppresses you with all his might. Ever waking and on the alert, he watches you with his eyes; he dogs you with his feet; seizes you with his hands; accuses you with his tongue; and, in short, makes you cry out in the words of the Litany, 'from all catchpoles, as well as devils, good Lord deliver us!'"

"But what is the reason," inquired I, "that you have not included the women among the thieves, for surely you must admit they are both of the same trade?"

"For mercy's sake," interrupted the devil, "not a word of the women, if ye love me; for we are so wearied with their endless importunity and the clatter of their tongues that we take alarm at the bare idea of them. It is the necessity we devils labour under of finding accommodation for them which makes the infernal abode what it is; for ever since the death of the Witch of Endor it has been their constant endeavour to stir up strife, and in their extreme malice and uncharitableness to set us all by the ears together. Not a few, indeed, have the hardihood to tell us to our face that when we have done our very worst they have still some greater punishment in store for us. Yet, perhaps, on the whole, we ought to

console ourselves that however great an infliction upon *us*, they are still more formidable to *you*, for we have there none of your grand theatres, saloons, parks, and other places of assignation, with which the earth is so abundantly supplied."

"You appear then to be in no want of a female population," returned I; "but in which do you most abound, the handsome or the opposite, think you?"

"Oh," quoth the devil, "for one beauty we have at least half a dozen frights; and the reason is, that your pretty women, when they have had their way till they are tired, and rung out the changes on all kind of pleasures long enough, generally turn out saints, and repent; whereas your plain people pine themselves to death for spite, and, flying in the face of Providence, so distort their tempers and their very souls that they are enough to terrify the devil himself when they arrive. For the most part, they live to be old, and invariably take leave of the world with a malediction on the younger and fairer part of the creation whom they leave behind. This is the burden of their last sigh."

"You have said quite enough; I wish to hear no more of the ladies. But to approach another and a humbler class, what are the kind of mendicants whom you have to find room for in the regions below? have you many?"

"Poor people," quoth the devil; "who are they?"

"Those," I replied, "who possess nothing in this world."

"How is it likely," returned the devil, "that they should be damned for having nothing, when men are only sent to us for sticking too closely to the world? You may look, but will find none of their names in our books; which is no wonder, for if you have nothing, the devil himself will desert you in time of need. To say the truth, where will you find falser friends than are your sycophants, hollow friends, boon companions, envious and malicious acquaintance; than sons, brothers, or other relatives that lie in wait for your life to get at your money, and, while they hang over your couch, sincerely wish you already at the devil?

"But the poor are never flattered, nor envied, nor attended, nor accompanied by friends. No one longs for their property; and, in fact, they are a class of people who live well, and die better; and there are a few who would not barter their rags for the privilege of royalty itself. They go and come at their pleasure; and be it war or peace, they are as free from cares as they are from taxes, and all burdens and duties that sit so uneasily on the shoulders of the great. For them judgments have no terrors, and executions no steel; they live inviolable, as if they bore a charm to keep intruders at a distance. What thought have they of the morrow? they husband the passing hour, and are content. The past with them is numbered with the dead, and not knowing the future, they fear it

not. But stop! it is an old saying, ' that when the devil preaches, the world is near at an end.' "

" This is the work of divine power," exclaimed the holy father, who was busily exorcising the catchpole: " Thou art the father of lies, devil, and withal dost promulgate mighty truth sufficient almost to convert a heart of stone."

" Mind your own business," retorted the devil, " and do not imagine that my conversion is to be brought about by you. If I speak the truth, it is in aggravation of your guilt, in order that when called upon, some future day, you may not plead any ignorance of your duty, my good father. Verily, you most of you shed tears at parting, not from sincere repentance, but a just dread of what you have to expect from your sins. In short, you are little better than hypocrites; and if at any time your reflections trouble you, it is because you know your bodies will not long hold out, and it is then only you begin to pick a quarrel with the sin itself."

" Thou art a base impostor," retorted the exorcist, " for there is many a righteous soul takes its sorrow from another cause. But I see thy drift; thou hast a mind to amuse us to put off thy own evil hour, which is not yet come, peradventure, when thou must quit the body of this poor fellow. It shall not be; I conjure thee in the name of Him thou darest not resist to cease thy tormenting, to quit and give him up, and henceforth to hold thy peace."

The devil, of course, obeyed; and the good priest, turning towards us, " My friends and fellow-countrymen," he cried, " albeit I am thoroughly of opinion that it can be no other than the devil who hath entertained us with this conversation through the troubled medium of this unlucky wretch; yet we may stand excused, one and all, in weighing well what he hath proposed, and reaping some benefit from such discourse. Without referring, therefore, to the authority from which it came, remember that Saul (wicked prince as he was) did prophesy truly of things to come, and that honey before now hath been plucked from the lion's mouth. Please to withdraw, then, and I shall make it my prayer—as it is my lively hope—that this strange and sorrowful exhibition may lead you to a genuine sense of your errors, and ere the close, to a blessed amendment of your lives."

MATÍAS DE LOS REYES

17TH CENTURY

THE DUMB LOVER AND HIS PHYSICIAN

IN the castle of Montcaller, not far distant from Turin, the capital of the Duke of Savoy, lived the widow of one of the principal chevaliers of that country. She was young, beautiful, and accomplished, and her retired and amiable manners shed the lustre of virtue over her personal graces. So unostentatious was her behaviour that she seemed to have been all her life the inhabitant of a village rather than of a court; and determining upon never again marrying, she retained only one domestic, and inhabited a small and lonely country house. Here she employed herself in the humblest duties of life, seldom allowed herself to be seen, except in going to mass on festival days, and lived in a manner altogether below her proper condition.

It is a custom in that country for the ladies in time of peace to entertain any illustrious strangers who may happen to be travelling through it, with all the attentions of domestic hospitality; but Finea, the name of our heroine, abhorred this custom, and on all occasions took advantage of her solitude to prevent the intrusion of company.

But about this time there arrived at Montcaller the cavalier whose misfortune is the subject of our story. He was a knight famous throughout the province for his valour and address, and had come thither on some important public business. Having accomplished his purpose, on the morning previous to his return home he went to hear mass at the church usually attended by Finea. He saw her, was struck with her beauty, and still more with the report of her wisdom and accomplishments. He, in fact, became most passionately enamoured of her, and, according to the usual course of things, his passion was strong in proportion to the difficulties which opposed themselves to its gratification.

Hastening, therefore, to Turin, and completing his official duties, he immediately returned to Montcaller to pursue the conquest of Finea's heart. He spent several days in reconnoitring, but his

mistress never made her appearance except, as before, in her walk to church; and if at any time he attempted to address her she covered her face with her hands, so as to forbid any conversation. Piqued beyond bearing at this, the knight felt his love still increasing as her disdain became more manifest. He used every art of the lover, enlarged his presents as his hopes decreased, multiplied his attentions in proportion as she rejected them, and the more severely she repulsed him the more earnest was he in his suit.

But neither presents, nor attentions, nor patience availed anything against the firmness and austerity of the widow. The miserable lover was able neither to obtain the least sign of success nor to divert his thoughts a moment from his design. He lost his appetite, sleep fled his eyes, and he fell into a dreadful sickness. The physicians, not discovering the seat of the disease, could apply no remedy, and he went step by step towards the grave. While in this condition, he was visited by a friend of his, a knight of Espoleto. To him, Lelio, the name of our hero, related the story of his love, and the cause of his sickness; particularising and dwelling upon the cruelty and harshness of his mistress, which would, without doubt, prove the cause of his death.

The knight of Espoleto, finding the origin of his friend's illness, said to him affectionately:

"Lelio, trust this affair of your love to my hands. Fear not but that I shall discover some method for bringing this lady to a more tractable state of mind."

"I ask no more," replied the sick man, "but that you would speak to her, and tell her the condition into which her cruelty has thrown me; for I think if she knew it, she would not be so inexorable—or so obstinately opposed to my passion. But tell me, how do you intend proceeding? for I have employed both entreaties and stratagems to obtain only one hour's interview, yet without success."

"Attend," said the other, "to your recovery, and leave everything else to me."

Lelio was contented with the promises of his friend, and in a few days, to the astonishment of his physicians, was in a condition to leave his chamber. The natives of Espoleto are all great talkers, and endowed with a ready wit. They are admirable beggars for Saint Anthony, whose cause they advocate through all Italy, and are omnipotent in words, gesticulations, and protestations, by which they make all whom they address converts to their persuasion. Lelio's friend was of this notion, and not forgetting the promise he had made, he set about fulfilling it in the best manner possible. As, in addition to their occupation already mentioned, the Espolitans are celebrated for their traffic in all female curiosities,

he thought he might make use of this circumstance to accomplish his designs.

He accordingly brought a basket, furnished it with wares, and having clad himself like a travelling merchant, set out for his destination. On arriving before Finea's house, he loudly recounted his list of articles, and the lady, hearing his noise, stepped to the door herself and beckoned him with her hand. The pedlar was not backward in accepting the invitation; and when he had entered the house, taking advantage of his assumed old age, he began to converse with great ease and garrulousness. The lady put her hand into the basket, and having shown great skill in her judgment of the different articles, at last fixed her attention on a piece of valuable and very beautiful stuff, saying, if she could she would have purchased the whole of it.

"Señora," said the pedlar, "take the whole, ask not the price either of this or anything else here—all is at your service. I am sufficiently paid in finding they are agreeable to your taste."

"Heavens," said the lady, "I require nothing but what I can pay for; women like me must not receive things for nothing; but I thank you for your kindness; tell me the price, I pray you, it is not right you should be so liberal of your property and labour."

"If," rejoined the pedlar, "you have a heart as generous as your countenance is beautiful, you will receive what I offer as coming from one who desires to consecrate them on the altar of your beauty."

Finea, hearing this, blushed like a rose opening its young buds to the first May sun. Looking attentively at the supposed merchant, she said, "You astonish me much by speaking as you do. I should wish to know to what purpose you thus address me, since I am persuaded you are under an error, and mistake the person to whom you are sent."

Then, without changing his appearance, but with eyes bent downwards, he spoke of the sufferings which her disdain had caused to Lelio, how passionately he loved her, and how no one else in the world possessed greater accomplishments, or could be found in the court of Turin with more wealth, valour, courtesy, affability; at length he succeeded so well that Finea agreed to give her lover a secret interview, appointing both the time and place.

Lelio was delighted at his friend's diligence, and hastening at the appointed time to the place assigned by Finea, was conducted by her, in company with a domestic, into a low back apartment, which was sufficiently large to hinder the conversation from being heard by the servant, who was sent to the farther part of it. Lelio began by declaring his intentions, with eyes full of love and tenderness, saying how much he had suffered for her sake, and supplicating

her to have pity on him, which, if she granted, would purchase his gratitude for ever.

She replied that she was a widow, that she had ceased to think of love; that she now only regarded the services of religion, and that there were many more beautiful women under no such restraints. At last, after much reasoning, the poor lover, seeing that he was fatiguing himself in vain, and that she was determined not to give him any comfort, with tears in his eyes, and almost ready to die, said:

"Since I see I must resign all hope of pity, and that I am doomed to suffer the extremity of misery, I have still one means left of preferring my request; it is that you would grant me peace for the sake of our common country."

The lady sought a moment to reply. "I question," said she at length, "if your love, Señor Lelio, be as great as you say. But to try it, you shall swear to observe one request which I will make, and which, if you religiously fulfil it, shall obtain my regard in return."

The incautious cavalier solemnly swore to do whatever Finea should require, and besought her to declare her wishes.

"Señor Lelio," said she, "I grant your petition; and you must fulfil mine, according to your solemn oath. That which I require of you then is, that for the space of three years from this time you speak no more with any human being, neither man nor woman, whomsoever it may be—that for this space you live as if you were dumb!"

Wonderful that thus, at the feet of a woman, the spoil of her dexterity, should have fallen all the wisdom and valour of a knight. Well were the sentiments of the wise man and of Saint Hieronimus now exemplified! Lelio was for a moment thunderstruck at his mistress's demand, which appeared mad and foolish, and almost impossible to be observed. However, having taken a most solemn oath, he determined upon fulfilling the promise. Having, therefore, made signs with his hand, placing it on his mouth, and thus assuring the lady of his intention, he departed, after a similar farewell, to his home.

Continuing in the same determination after his return to observe his oath inviolably, he pretended to have become suddenly dumb—a misfortune for which he was greatly pitied by all who knew him. From Montcaller he went to Turin, still pretending to be suffering under the loss of his speech. He then proceeded to Ferrara, whither his fame as one of the bravest and most accomplished chevaliers in Europe had preceded him.

The duke accordingly invited him to his court, where his noble bearing won him the respect of the courtiers and the admiration of the ladies. An opportunity also soon occurred in which he ren-

dered the duke good service by his knightly prowess; and the war in which the prince was then engaged had no sooner terminated than he bestowed the highest honours on the good chevalier for his aid. But the more he regarded him, the greater was his sorrow for the affliction under which he suffered, and he determined that no means should be left untried for his recovery. He therefore made it known throughout Italy, at all times celebrated for its learned schools of medicine, that whosoever could discover a remedy for the dumb knight should receive a reward of fifty thousand florins; but, to prevent needless trouble, that they who failed should forfeit as much, or be imprisoned in default of payment.

Numberless were the unfortunate physicians who employed all the resources of their art in vain, and repented of having ever made the attempt, in prison. At length Finea, secretly secure of success, offered to effect the cure; but all the courtiers ridiculed the idea of a woman's performing a cure in which so many learned men had failed. The duke, however, determined on making the experiment of her skill, and directed her to be shown the apartment of Lelio, which was in the most retired part of the palace.

Finea, however, was not met with the ardour which she had, it may be supposed, expected. The knight armed himself with reason and resolution, and resisted every approach of tenderness, with the suspicion that she had been attracted by the reward rather than by love and compassion for him. He called to mind, also, the greatness of the affection he had showed her—the cruel manner in which she had treated him, and how much he had suffered for her sake.

Having a little tempered his passion by these means, he determined upon taking vengeance for her cruelty, and making her suffer in turn. Finea, therefore, having saluted him courteously, and mentioned the reasons for desiring to see him alone, without obtaining the expected reply, said:

"Señor Lelio, do you not know me? Do you not see that I am your mistress, Finea, to whom you a little time since made so many professions of love?"

He answered her by signs that he knew her well, and then, touching his tongue and shaking his head, gave her to understand he had not the power of speech.

Finea answered him a little anxiously, that she absolved him from his oath—that she would keep her promise, and excuse him the half-year still wanting to complete the period of his silence—that she had come to Ferrara for the sole purpose of doing this, and giving him a full assurance of her affection. To all which Lelio gave no reply but touching his tongue and sorrowfully shrugging up his shoulders.

The Señora, seeing the resolution of Lelio, was at a loss what

to do; for neither tears, nor promises, nor entreaties were able to effect the miracle she had boasted herself capable of performing. At last, finding nothing of any avail, she was obliged to retire unsuccessful, and in default of paying the fine, was thrown into prison with the rest who had made vain attempts at the cure.

After this occurrence, the cavalier, well satisfied with the revenge he had taken, presented himself before the duke, and unloosening his hitherto tied-up tongue, told him the whole history of the circumstances which led to his long silence. He then besought him immediately to free the persons who had been so unjustly confined on this account, and repaid them for their sufferings and uneasiness with very ample gifts. Finea was then sent for, and in the presence of all the court Lelio said:

"Well do you know, Señora, how long and how faithfully I served you, and how truly I deserved to obtain that return which the highest lady of the land fails not to give her faithful lover; well do you know also how little was the reward I received for my great toil, and how you obliged me, by a solemn oath, to three years' silence. This penance I have observed without the slightest remission; and I would rather have died than have failed in the observance. And now, although your rigour deserved a greater punishment than that you have received, I am determined to use my power with lenity; and I, therefore, publicly say that you ought to receive the reward promised for my cure, and I supplicate His Highness to give it you for a dowry and to permit me to espouse you, hoping that you will in future be more cautious and tractable."

The duke and all his courtiers greatly applauded the address of Lelio, and His Highness immediately ordered the fifty thousand florins to be given to Finea, as being rightly due to her for the cure of Lelio. To the knight he gave fresh assurances of favour and promotion; and the nuptials being celebrated with all due rejoicing, he succeeded in persuading Lelio to settle in Ferrara, where he spent his days with Finea in peace and happiness.

SERAFÍN ESTÉBANEZ CALDERÓN

1799–1867

AN ANDALUSIAN DUEL

THROUGH the little square of St. Anna, towards a certain tavern, where the best wine is to be quaffed in Seville, there walked in measured steps two men, whose demeanour clearly manifested the soil which gave them birth. He who walked in the middle of the street, taller than the other by about a finger's length, sported with affected carelessness the wide, slouched hat of Ecija, with tassels of glass beads and a ribbon as black as his sins. He wore his cloak gathered under his left arm; the right, emerging from a turquoise lining, exposed the merino lambskin with silver clasps.

The herdsman's boots—white, with Turkish buttons,—the breeches gleaming red from below the cloak and covering the knee, and, above all, his strong and robust appearance, dark curly hair, and eye like a red-hot coal, proclaimed at a distance that all this combination belonged to one of those men who put an end to horses between their knees and tire out the bull with their lance. He walked on, arguing with his companion, who was rather spare than prodigal in his person, but marvellously lithe and supple.

The latter was shod with low shoes, garters united the stockings to the light-blue breeches, the waistcoat was cane-coloured, his sash light green, and jaunty shoulder-knots, lappets, and rows of buttons ornamented the camelite jacket. The open cloak, the hat drawn over his ear, his short, clean steps, and the manifestations in all his limbs and movements of agility and elasticity beyond trial plainly showed that in the arena, carmine cloth in hand, he would mock at the most frenzied of Jarama bulls, or the best horned beasts from Utrera.

I—who adore and die for such people, though the compliment be not returned—went slowly in the wake of their worships, and, unable to restrain myself, entered with them the same tavern, or rather eating-house, since there they serve certain provocatives as well as wine, and I, as my readers perceive, love to call things by their right name. I entered and sat down at once, and in such a manner as not to interrupt my Oliver and Roland, and that they might not notice me, when I saw that, as if believing themselves

alone, they threw their arms with an amicable gesture round each other's neck, and thus began their discourse:

"Pulpete," said the taller, "now that we are going to meet each other, knife in hand—you here, I there, . . *one, two,* . . *on your guard,* . . *triz, traz,* . . *have that,* . . *take this and call it what you like* . . .—let us first drain a tankard to the music and measure of some songs."

"Señor Balbeja," replied Pulpete, drawing his face aside and spitting with the greatest neatness and pulchritude towards his shoe, "I am not the kind of man either for la Gorja or other similar earthly matters, or because a steel tongue is sheathed in my body, or my weasand slit, or for any other such trifle, to be provoked or vexed with such a friend as Balbeja. Let the wine be brought, and then we will sing; and afterwards blood—blood to the hilt."

The order was given, they clinked glasses, and, looking one at the other, sang a Sevillian song.

This done, they threw off their cloaks with an easy grace, and unsheathed their knives with which to prick one another, the one Flemish with a white haft, the other from Guadix, with a guard to the hilt, both blades dazzling in their brightness, and sharpened and ground enough for operating upon cataracts, much less ripping up bellies and bowels. The two had already cleft the air several times with the said lancets, their cloaks wound round their left arm—first drawing closer, then back, now more boldly and in bounds—when Pulpete hoisted the flag for parley, and said:

"Balbeja, my friend, I only beg you to do me the favour not to fan my face with *Juilon* your knife, since a slash might use it so ill that my mother who bore me would not know me, and I should not like to be considered ugly; neither is it right to mar and destroy what God made in His likeness."

"Agreed," replied Balbeja; "I will aim lower."

"Except—except my stomach also, for I was ever a friend to cleanliness, and I should not like to see myself fouled in a bad way, if your knife and arm played havoc with my liver and intestines."

"I will strike higher; but let us go on."

"Take care of my chest, it was always weak."

"Then just tell me, friend, *where* am I to sound or tap you?"

"My dear Balbeja, there's always plenty of time and space to hack at a man: I have here on my left arm a wen, of which you can make meat as much as you like."

"Here goes for it," said Balbeja, and he hurled himself like an arrow; the other warded off the thrust with his cloak, and both, like skilful penmen, began again tracing S's and signatures in the air with dashes and flourishes, without, however, raising a particle of skin.

I do not know what would have been the end of this onslaught, since my venerable, dry, and shrivelled person was not suitable for forming a point of exclamation between two combatants; and the tavern-keeper troubled so little about what was happening that he drowned the stamping of their feet and clatter of the tumbling stools and utensils by scraping street music on a guitar as loud as he could. Otherwise he was as calm as if he were entertaining two angels instead of two devils incarnate.

I do not know, I repeat, how this scene would have ended, when there crossed the threshold a personage who came to take a part in the development of the drama. There entered, I say, a woman of twenty to twenty-two years of age, diminutive in body, superlative in audacity and grace. Neat and clean hose and shoes, short, black flounced petticoat, a linked girdle, head-dress or mantilla of fringed taffeta caught together at the nape of her neck, and a corner of it over her shoulder, she passed before my eyes with swaying hips, arms akimbo, and moving her head to and fro as she looked about her on all sides.

Upon seeing her the tavern-keeper dropped his instrument, and I was overtaken by perturbation such as I had not experienced for thirty years (I am, after all, only flesh and blood); but, without halting for such lay-figures, she advanced to the field of battle.

There was a lively to-do here: Don Pulpete and Don Balbeja, when they saw Donna Gorja appear, first cause of the disturbance and future prize for the victor, increased their feints, flourishes, curvets, onsets, crouching, and bounds—all, however, without touching a hair. Our Helen witnessed in silence for a long time this scene in history with that feminine pleasure which the daughters of Eve enjoy at such critical moments. But gradually her pretty brow clouded over, until, drawing from her delicate ear, not a flower or earring, but the stump of a cigar, she hurled it amidst the jousters. Not even Charles V.'s cane in the last duel in Spain produced such favourable effects. Both came forward immediately with formal respect, and each, by reason of the discomposure of his person and clothes, presumed to urge a title by which to recommend himself to the fair with the flounces. She, as though pensive, was going over the passage of arms in her mind, and then, with firm and confident resolution, spoke thus:

"And is this affair for me?"

"Who else should it be for? since I . . . since nobody——" they replied in the same breath.

"Listen, gentlemen," said she. "For females such as I and my parts, of my charms and descent—daughter of la Gatusa, neice of la Méndez, and grand-daughter of la Astrosa—know that there are neither pacts nor compacts, nor any such futile things, nor are any of them worth a farthing. And when men challenge each

other, let the knife do its work and the red blood flow, so as not to have my mother's daughter present without giving her the pleasure of snapping her fingers in the face of the other. If you pretend you are fighting for me, it's a lie; you are wholly mistaken, and that not by halves. I love neither of you. Mingalarios of Zafra is to my taste, and he and I look upon you with scorn and contempt. Good-bye, my braves; and, if you like, call my man to account."

She spoke, spat, smoothed the saliva with the point of her shoe, looking Pulpete and Balbeja full in the face, and went out with the same expressive movements with which she entered.

The two unvarnished braggarts followed the valorous Donna Gorja with their eyes; and then with a despicable gesture drew their knives across their sleeve as though wiping off the blood there might have been, sheathed them at one and the same time, and said together: . . . . . .

"Through woman the world was lost, through a woman Spain was lost; [1] but it has never been known, nor do ballads relate, nor the blind beggars sing, nor is it heard in the square or markets, that two valiant men killed each other for another lover."

"Give me that fist, Don Pulpete."

"Your hand, Don Balbeja."

They spoke and strode out into the street, the best friends in the world, leaving me all amazed at such whimsicality.

[1] Count Julian, governor of the provinces on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar, to avenge himself on King Roderick for dishonouring his daughter, the famous La Cava (also called Florinda) of the Spanish ballads, invited (A.D. 711) the Moors into Spain.

ANTONIO DE TRUEBA

1821–1888

THE ARCHITECT'S WIFE

I

TOWARDS the middle of the fourteenth century Toledo was laid under siege by Don Enrique de Trastamara; but the city, faithful to the King surnamed "the Cruel," offered a brave and obstinate resistance.

Often had the loyal and valiant Toledans crossed the magnificent bridge of San Martin—one of the structures of greatest beauty of that city of splendid erections—and had cast themselves on the encampment of Don Enrique, which was pitched on the Cigarrales, causing sad havoc to the besieging army.

In order to prevent the repetition of these attacks, Don Enrique resolved upon destroying the bridge.

The Cigarrales, upon which the army was encamped, were beautiful lands enclosing luxuriant orchards, pleasure gardens, and summer residences. The fame of their beauty had inspired Tirso and many Spanish poets to sing its praises.

One night the luxuriant trees were cut down by the soldiers of Don Enrique, and heaped upon the bridge. At day-dawn an immense fire raged on the bridge of San Martin, which assumed huge proportions, its sinister gleams lighting up the devastating hordes, the flowing current of the Tagus, the palace of Don Rodrigo, and the little Arab Tower. The crackling of the strong and massive pillars, worked with all the exquisite skill of the artificers who created the marvels of the Alhambra, sounded like the piteous cry of Art oppressed by Barbarism.

The Toledans, awakened by this terrible spectacle, ran to save the beautiful erection from the utter ruin which menaced it, but all their efforts were unavailing. A tremendous crash, which sounded throughout the creeks and valleys watered by the Tagus, told them that the bridge no longer existed.

Alas! it was too true!

When the rising sun gilded the cupolas of the Imperial City, the Toledan maidens who came down to the river to fill their pitchers from the pure and crystal stream returned sorrowfully with empty

pitchers on their heads; the clear waters had become turbid and muddy, for the roaring waves were carrying down the still-smoking ruins of the bridge.

Popular indignation rose to its highest pitch, and overflowed all limits; for the bridge of San Martin was the only path that led to the lovely Cigarrales.

Joining their forces for one supreme effort, the Toledans made a furious onslaught on the camp, and, after blood had flowed in torrents, compelled the army to take flight.

II

Many years passed since the bridge of San Martin had been destroyed.

Kings and Archbishops had projected schemes to replace it by another structure, of equal strength and beauty; but the genius and perseverance of the most famous architects were unable to carry out their wishes. The rapid, powerful currents of the river destroyed and swept away the scaffolding and framework before the gigantic arches could be completed.

Don Pedro Tenorio, Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, to whom the city owes her glory almost as much as to her Kings, sent criers throughout the cities and towns of Spain, inviting architects, Christian and Moorish, to undertake the reconstruction of the bridge of San Martin; but with no result. The difficulties to be encountered were judged insurmountable.

At length one day a man and a woman, complete strangers to the place, entered Toledo through the Cambron Gate. They carefully inspected the ruined bridge. Then they engaged a small house near the ruins, and proceeded to take up their quarters there.

On the following day the man proceeded to the Archbishop's palace.

His Eminence was holding a conference of prelates, learned men, and distinguished knights, who were attracted by his piety and wisdom.

Great was his joy when one of his attendants announced that an architect from distant lands solicited the honour of an audience.

The Cardinal Archbishop hastened to receive the stranger. The first salutations over, his Eminence bade him be seated.

"My Lord Archbishop," began the stranger, "my name, which is unknown to your Eminence, is Juan de Arèvalo, and I am an architect by profession."

"Are you come in answer to the invitation I have issued calling upon skilful architects to come and rebuild the bridge of San Martin, which in former times afforded a passage between the city and the Cigarrales?"

"It was indeed that invitation which brought me to Toledo."

" Are you aware of the difficulties of its construction? "

" I am well aware of them. But I can surmount them."

" Where did you study architecture? "

" In Salamanca."

" And what erection have you to show me as a proof of your skill? "

" None whatever, my lord."

The Archbishop made a gesture of impatience and distrust which was noticed by the stranger.

" I was a soldier in my youth," continued he, " but ill-health compelled me to leave the arduous profession of arms and return to Castile, the land of my birth, where I dedicated myself to the study of architecture, theoretical and practical."

" I regret," replied the Archbishop, " that you are unable to mention any work of skill that you have carried out."

" There are some erections on the Tormes and the Duero of which others have the credit, but which ought to honour him who now addresses you."

" I do not understand you."

" I was poor and obscure," rejoined Juan de Arèvalo, " and I sought only to earn bread and shelter. Glory I left to others."

" I deeply regret," replied Don Pedro Tenorio, " that you have no means of assuring us that we should not trust in you in vain."

" My lord, I can offer you one guarantee which I trust will satisfy your Eminence."

" What is that? "

" My life! "

" Explain yourself."

" When the framework of the centre arch shall be removed, I, the architect, will stand upon the keystone. Should the bridge fall, I shall perish with it."

" I accept the guarantee."

" My lord, trust me, and I will carry out the work! "

The Archbishop pressed the hand of the architect, and Juan de Arèvalo departed, his heart full of joyous expectation. His wife was anxiously awaiting his return. She was young and handsome still, despite the ravages of want and suffering.

" Catherine! my Catherine! " cried the architect, clasping his wife to his arms, " amid the monuments that embellish Toledo there will be one to transmit to posterity the name of Juan de Arèvalo! "

III

Time passed. No longer could the Toledans say, on approaching the Tagus across the rugged cliffs and solitary places where in former times stood the Garden of Florinda, " Here once stood the

bridge of San Martin." Though the new bridge was still supported by solid scaffolding and massive frames, yet the centre arch already rose to view, and the whole was firmly planted on the ruins of the former.

The Archbishop, Don Pedro Tenorio, and the Toledans were heaping gifts and praises on the fortunate architect whose skill had joined the central arch, despite the furious power of the surging currents, and who had completed the gigantic work with consummate daring.

It was the eve of the feast of San Ildefonso, the patron saint of the city of Toledo. Juan de Arèvalo respectfully informed the Cardinal Archbishop that nothing was now wanting to conclude the work but to remove the woodwork of the arches and the scaffolding. The joy of the Cardinal and of the people was great. The removal of the scaffolding and frames which supported the masonry was a work attended with considerable danger; but the calmness and confidence of the architect who had pledged himself to stand on the keystone and await the consequences of success or lose his life, inspired all with perfect trust.

The solemn blessing and inauguration of the bridge of San Martin was fixed to take place on the day following, and the bells of all the churches of Toledo were joyously ringing in announcement of the grand event appointed for the morrow. The Toledans contemplated with rejoicing from the heights above the Tagus the lovely Cigarrales, which for many years had remained solitary and silent—indeed, almost abandoned—but which on the day following would be restored to life.

Towards nightfall Juan de Arèvalo mounted the central arch to see that all was ready for the opening ceremony. He went humming to himself as he inspected all the works and preparations. But suddenly an expression of misgiving overspread his countenance. A thought had struck him—a thought that froze his blood. He descended from the bridge and hastened home.

At the door his wife received him with a joyous smile and a merry word of congratulation. But on beholding his troubled face she turned deadly pale.

"Good heavens!" she cried, affrighted, "are you ill, dear Juan?"

"No, dear wife," he replied, striving to master his emotion.

"Do not deceive me! your face tells me that something ails you?"

"Oh! the evening is cold and the work has been excessive."

"Come in and sit down at the hearth and I will get the supper ready, and when you have had something to eat and are rested you will be at ease again!"

"At ease!" murmured Juan to himself, in agony of spirit,

whilst his wife busied herself in the preparation of the supper, placing the table close to the hearth, upon which she threw a faggot.

Juan made a supreme effort to overcome his sadness, but it was futile. His wife could not be deceived.

"For the first time in our married life," she said, "you hide a sorrow from me. Am I no longer worthy of your love and confidence?"

"Catherine!" he exclaimed, "do not, for heaven's sake, grieve me further by doubting my affection for you!"

"Where there is no trust," she rejoined in feeling tones, "there can be no true love."

"Then respect, for your own good and mine, the secret I conceal from you."

"Your secret is a sorrow, and I wish to know it and to lighten it."

"To lighten it? That is impossible!"

"To such a love as mine," she urged, "nothing is impossible."

"Very well: then hear me. To-morrow my life and honour will be lost. The bridge must fall into the river, and I on the keystone shall perish with the fabric which, with so much anxiety and so many hopes, I have erected."

"No, no!" cried Catherine, as she clasped her husband in her arms with loving tenderness, smothering in her own heart the anguish of the revelation.

"Yes, dear wife! When I was most confident of my triumph, I discovered that, owing to an error in my calculations, the bridge must fall to-morrow when the framework is removed. And with it perishes the architect who projected and directed it."

"The bridge may sink into the waters, but not you, my loved one. On bended knees I will beseech the noble Cardinal to release you from your terrible engagement."

"What you ask will be in vain. Even should the Cardinal accede to your entreaty, I refuse life destitute of honour."

"You shall have life and honour both, dear husband," replied Catherine.

IV

It was midnight. Juan, worn out with grief and anxious work, at last had fallen asleep; a feverish sleep that partook more of the character of a nightmare than of Nature's sweet restorer.

Meanwhile his wife had for some time made a show of sleeping. But she watched her husband anxiously. When she felt certain that he had at length succumbed to a deep sleep, she softly rose, and scarcely daring to breathe, crept out into the kitchen. She opened the window gently and looked out.

The night was dark; now and again vivid flashes of lightning lit up the sky. No sound was heard save the roar of the rushing currents of the Tagus and the sighing of the wind as it swept in and out among the scaffolding and complicated framework of the bridge.

Catherine noiselessly closed the window. From the hearth she took one of the half-burnt faggots which still smouldered, and throwing a cloak over her shoulders went out into the silent streets, her heart beating wildly.

Where was she proceeding? Was she carrying that burning faggot as a torch to light her path in the dense darkness of a moonless night? It was indeed a dangerous track, covered as it was with broken boulders and uneven ground. Yet she strove rather to conceal the lighted wood beneath her cloak.

At last she reached the bridge. The wind still sighed and whistled, and the river continued to break its current against the pillars, as though irritated at meeting obstacles which it could no longer sweep away.

Catherine approached the buttress of the bridge. An involuntary shudder of terror passed through her frame. Was it because she stood on the edge of that abyss of roaring waters? Or was it because her hand, only accustomed hitherto to deeds of goodness, was now brandishing the torch of destruction? Or rather did she tremble because a tremendous peal of thunder at that moment resounded through the vault of heaven?

Waving the torch to kindle it afresh, she applied it to the dry, resinous wood of the scaffolding. The wood quickly ignited, and the flame, fanned by the wind, ascended with fearful rapidity, spreading and involving arches and framework and the whole structure of the bridge.

Then she quitted the scene swiftly. Aided by the glare of the conflagration and the vivid flashes of lightning which lit up the sky, Catherine soon traversed the space which separated her from her home. She entered as noiselessly as she had left it, and closed the door. Her husband still slept soundly, and had not missed her. Catherine again pretended to be fast asleep, as though she had never left her bed.

A few moments later a noise of many people running arose within the city, while from every belfry the bells rang forth the terrible alarm of fire. A tremendous crash succeeded, followed by a cry of anguish such as had been uttered years before, when the besieging army wrecked the former bridge.

Juan woke in terror; Catherine lay at his side, apparently sleeping calmly. He dressed himself in haste, and ran out to learn the reason of the uproar. To his secret joy he beheld the ruin of the burning bridge.

The Cardinal Archbishop and the Toledans attributed the disaster to a flash of lightning which had struck the central arch, and had, moreover, ignited the whole structure. The general sorrow was intense. Great also was the public sympathy with the despair which the calamity must have caused the architect, who was on the eve of a great triumph. The inhabitants never knew whether it was fire from heaven or an accident that had caused the conflagration; but Juan de Arèvalo, who was good and pious, and firmly believed in the protection of heaven, never wavered for an instant in the belief that the bridge had really been destroyed by lightning.

The destruction of the bridge, however, only retarded Juan's triumph for a twelvemonth. On the following year, on the same festival of San Ildefonso, his new bridge was solemnly thrown open by the Cardinal; and the joyous Toledans once more crossed the Tagus to visit the lovely grounds of the Cigarrales, which they had been deprived of for so many years. On that auspicious day the Cardinal celebrated the event by giving a magnificent banquet. At his right hand sat the architect and his noble wife; and after a highly complimentary speech from the Cardinal, the whole company, amidst a tumult of applause, conducted Juan and Catherine to their home.

Five hundred years have passed since then, but Juan's bridge still stands secure above the rushing waters of the Tagus. His second calculation had no error.

JUAN VALERA

1824–1905

THE FAIRY KISS

I

A VERY remarkable guest had arrived at the Monastery of the Capuchins in the city about the year 1672. The visitor was celebrated everywhere for the acuteness of his intelligence, the profound knowledge which he had acquired, and the scientific works which he had published. It is enough to say, and all that need be said, that the guest was the Most Reverend Father Antonio de Fuente la Pena, the former Provincial of the Order.

After having dined with excellent appetite, and enjoyed a good sleep to recover from the fatigue of the journey, Father Antonio received in his cell the Superior, Father Domingo, to whom he spoke of the important matter which had induced him to come to that holy abode.

"I have happened to hear," he said, "of the strange case of Donna Eulalia, the only daughter of the distinguished knight, Don Cesar del Robledal. And after having considered and weighed everything, I have come to the conclusion that the girl is neither the victim of demoniacal possession nor is she hag-ridden."

"Your Reverence must pardon me if I contradict you. I do not see any proof that the girl is neither possessed nor hag-ridden. Although perhaps I ought not to say it, it is well known that, thanks be to God, I have a good deal of power over evil spirits, and I have driven a great many out of the bodies of the people whom they were tormenting. If those which torment the young Donna Eulalia do not obey me, it is not because they have not taken up their abode within her or around her, but because they are very sly and crafty. If they are within her, they hide and dissimulate in such a way that they do not hear my exorcisms, and if they are around her and are tormenting her, they are always quick enough to make their escape when I come, and do not return until I have gone. The symptoms of the evil are very evident, however. The only thing which I cannot quite decide is whether the girl is possessed of a devil or hag-ridden."

"Well, then," replied Antonio, "my conclusion is quite the

contrary, and the more I think the more I am confirmed in my opinion. Donna Eulalia never speaks Latin or any other language than our own pure and elegant Spanish; her feet always touch the ground when she is not sitting or lying down; instead of being pale, thin, and haggard, I know that she is very pretty and so fresh-looking that she is like a rose in May; and the fact that she refuses to marry any of the suitors whom her father proposes to her, and that she appears sad and thoughtful, as well as the fact that she spends her evenings alone in her room, engaged in mysterious conversations with invisible beings, does not prove that she is possessed by the devil or anything of the sort. Devils are never so gentle and friendly with any human creature. Therefore it is a being of a less wicked and hurtful nature than those fallen angels which has influenced the young lady, Donna Eulalia. Clearly, it is not a devil but a fairy which visits her and talks to her. I am well up in the knowledge of these beings, since I have made it my business to study the subject of fairies, as you know from my celebrated book entitled *The Being Explained*, and so I have come here to see if I can get into communication with the fairy which visits Donna Eulalia, and induce it to leave her, using for this purpose the means placed in my power by my special knowledge."

"It is strange," observed Father Domingo, "that your Reverence should make this statement only on the ground of conjecture."

"It is not mere conjecture," replied Father Antonio. "Although as a punishment for my sins I have never been worthy to have supernatural revelations made to me, still I very often have natural revelations, and that is the case now. We are alone here, and I can speak with freedom, confiding in the indispensable seal of secrecy, as between one priest and another."

Father Domingo made a sign that he would not repeat what was about to be said to him, and Father Antonio continued in a low mysterious tone:

"The fairy which visits Donna Eulalia has talked freely with and has explained everything to me. It is well known that I am esteemed, respected, and even loved by the fairies, whom I have defended from the insults and calumnies heaped on them by ignorant people. I have proved that they are not devils or lost souls, but very subtle and invisible creatures, almost always bright and lively, having their origin in the thinnest of air. As the fairies are pleased with me, is there anything extraordinary in the fact that they should come and converse with me? Again, my studies and investigations with respect to the tiniest and almost least corporeal of beings have sharpened my senses so much that I can see, touch, and hear what remains quite imperceptible to the coarser powers of ordinary mortals. Forgive me this piece

of boasting; but when I look around over the universe I can discover ten times as much life and intelligence as the majority of other men can realise. But to keep to our present case, for the last ten years, ever since Donna Eulalia was fifteen, for she will be twenty-five within three days now, she has been solitary, reserved with other people, intractable and obstinate; but I am aware now that the fairy is going to depart from her within these next three days, and then he will appear in the form of a handsome young man. Donna Eulalia will then be relieved of all other trouble, and although she will always be reserved, modest, and well-behaved, still she will lay aside her obstinacy, will cease to be shy and unduly retiring, and will be gracious and approachable like any other girl of her age."

With a slightly sarcastic intonation, although tempered or veiled by respect, Father Domingo exclaimed:

"No doubt this revelation was not made by halves, and the fairy has told your Reverence the place and time of his disappearance and of the appearance of the young man."

"Yes, that is so," replied Father Antonio. "It will take place at midnight, in Donna Eulalia's own room, where we are to go and conceal ourselves, not mentioning the case to Donna Eulalia or to any one else, except Donna Eulalia's father, who is to accompany us, but must be unarmed, lest he should have a sudden outbreak of anger. Your Reverence can be armed with your exorcisms and I shall be fortified with my knowledge of the world of fairies. I feel perfectly certain that all will end happily."

II

At the time fixed on the appointed night, Don Cesar and the two friars stole on tiptoe in the most mysterious silence to the door of Donna Eulalia's room. Father Domingo was armed with his book of exorcisms and with a hyssop sprinkler; Father Antonio had an incense burner, in order to set fire to magic herbs, and scatter smoke around; and Don Cesar was armed only with patience, which he had solemnly promised not to lose and not to be angry, no matter what might happen.

When all their rites and invocations had been performed, Father Antonio and Father Domingo told Don Cesar to knock loudly at the folding doors of Donna Eulalia's room, which was locked, and to order her to throw both doors wide at once, without any excuse or pretext of any sort.

There was no means of refusing or delaying obedience to this command, and the door was suddenly thrown wide open. Through the opening there appeared, like a magnificent portrait by Claudio Coello in its frame, a handsome young man very richly and be-

comingly dressed in the uniform and decorations of a captain in the army, a long sword by his side, waving plumes adorning the hat which he carried in his right hand, a rich gold chain round his neck, and orders glittering on his breast, and with gold spurs completing his full riding-boots.

Don Cesar, who was very hot-tempered and very jealous of his family honour, would have rushed forward and thrown himself on the stranger if the two priests had not held him back, one on each side.

The young officer, in a calm and dignified tone, then said:

"Compose yourself, Don Cesar, and do not be angry at finding me here at such a late hour. I am Captain Don Pedro Gonzalez de la Rivera, whose station and qualifications have already been described to your worship by my friend the Genoese banker, Jusepe Salvago, and whose exploits in Portugal, in Flanders, in Italy, and in the Far East, where I have borne arms, have been made known to you by other persons of consequence. I aspire to the hand of Donna Eulalia; she has given me proofs that she would like to have me for her husband, and all that we want now is your paternal consent, to be followed by the blessing of the Reverend Father Antonio, who is present, and who, I hope, will not refuse us his benediction."

"All that would be very well," replied Don Cesar with ill-repressed anger, "if your honour did not ask for it after offending my grey hairs, breaking into my house, and trampling down all respect."

"Don Cesar," replied the Captain, smiling, "I have committed this apparent offence in vengeance for another not so apparent which your worship committed against me ten years ago, when you found me in this very same spot, in tender conversation with the young lady, Donna Eulalia, who was not then quite fifteen years of age. I was then a young monkey of sixteen, and your worship drove me out of here with cuffs of anything but a paternal nature. For love of Donna Eulalia I endured all this, and I would have endured even worse insults if worse had been possible. But since then I have given sufficient proof of my valour, and again, Fortune has favoured me, and my honour is well established. The satisfaction which I ask for and expect for past injuries is that your worship will accept me as your son-in-law."

Just then Donna Eulalia came forward and placed herself beside the young officer. She looked most charming in her rich and graceful robe and magnificent jewels, and her youthful blushing face showed the greatest joy and happiness. What was Don Cesar to do? He consented to all, and embraced his two children affectionately, but first of all, he looked at the Captain closely, and said:

"God bless me, my boy, how you have grown and improved in these ten years! Who would ever recognise in you the impish fair-haired boy who was acolyte to the Capuchins and used to ring such lively peals on the bells?"

III

With all his respect and consideration for Father Antonio, the Father Superior could not avoid speaking his mind and saying that it was clear to him that if there had been no devil in the case, neither had there been any fairy, and that the whole affair had only been a little comedy.

Father Antonio, however, defended himself, and before he returned to Madrid, where he usually resided, he spoke to the Father Superior as follows:

"Not only has there been a fairy, but one of the most romantic fairies which could possibly exist in this sublunar world. The young maiden was so pure, so truthful, and so ignorant of evil that at fifteen years of age she seemed an angel rather than a woman. The lad was as good and as honest as she was. Both loved each other with the most sincere affection, without the least thought of evil, without any admixture of the passion which had never been aroused in either of them. They wished to be united in a holy bond of marriage so as to live together until their death, as they had lived side by side since their infancy. The great obstacle to this was the difference in their social positions. Periquito would have to win for himself social station, a name, renown, and fortune. When they separated in order that he might go forth in his noble quest, without the least idea of wrong, with the innocence of children, and the fervent love of heaven in their souls, their lips met in one long kiss. There is no doubt that at that moment there fluttered between their lips a light particle of ether, an indivisible atom, the soul of intelligence and life. The burning flame of their pure love penetrated the atom, gave it form and brightness, and all that there is of beauty and nobility in the world came to be reflected in it as in an enchanted mirror in which everything is purified and rendered sublime. The sacred fire of love in each young soul formed into one shape, and without entirely leaving either of them it became an invisible being with a separate existence and yet with something shadowy, insubstantial, and most resembling the spirit of conscience. The lovers parted. He went very far away, he fought and wandered. During ten years he heard nothing more of her or she of him in the ordinary everyday way of human communication. But the being which represented the aspirations of their souls, the fairy which had taken shape from their kiss, with its wings glittering like those of a butterfly,

and its speed more swift than that of lightning, flew from one end of the earth to the other, now alighting on him, now on her, so that they could embrace as if they were really together and thus renew the innocent kiss from which the fairy form had taken shape, not as a vain memory but as something ever new and ever keeping their love alive. Does your Reverence doubt that such a fairy exists or has existed? How else can we explain the tenacious persistence during ten years of the one early mutual love? It was not only on her side. It was not only on his side. It lived in both, but when they parted it separated both to form from the union of their souls a distinct being. This being now has no longer need to exist; it disappears but does not die. We cannot say that death has come or will come to the spark of intelligence, enriched with the vivid representation of all that is most beautiful in earth and heaven, when, having fulfilled the mission for which it was created, it blends into the great ocean of intelligence and of feeling from which we derive harmonious strength, the light of day, and the life which palpitates in the myriads of invisible beings which fill the vast spaces of the universe."

Father Domingo listened to all this, and to much more spoken by Father Antonio, with attention, and he finally became convinced that there really were fairies; some prosaic, others romantic like that of Don Pedro and Donna Eulalia, and that Father Antonio's theory did not in any way appear incompatible with Catholic truth, since it redounded to the greater glory of God, as far as such a thing can be understood and grasped by the limited power of comprehension of human nature.

JUAN VALERA

THE ARCHBISHOP'S COOK

In the good old days, when Archbishops were rich and powerful, there lived in Toledo an Archbishop who was so austere and self-denying that his table was scantily furnished, and he accustomed himself so much to fast-day food that his diet was fish, vegetables, and cereal dishes.

This venerable vegetarian servant of God allowed himself one luxury, and even that was in accordance with his principles. His cook was accustomed to serve him for luncheon a most delicious and nourishing vegetable soup, made, according to the cook's own statement, solely of lentils, beans, and peas. The cook was so clever in his treatment of this modest fare that the soup appeared, thanks to the skilful flavouring employed, superior to the best soups which could be obtained from the richest materials.

However, it happened unfortunately that this skilful servitor had one great defect. He could not agree with the butler. And as the quarrel was constantly renewed, even on the most trifling pretexts, the cook was dismissed.

Another cook came to provide for the Lord Archbishop's table, and he was instructed to prepare a good vegetable soup for his Grace's luncheon. He did his best, but the Archbishop found the soup detestable, and ordered his butler to engage another cook and to get rid of the incompetent one.

Eight or nine other cooks followed in rapid succession, for none of them succeeded in flavouring the soup in the proper way, and they had to depart, one after the other, in disgrace for their incompetence in providing the proper archiepiscopal fare.

At last a cook was engaged who in addition to his culinary art possessed a certain amount of common sense and acuteness, and before entering on his responsible work, he had the good idea of going to see the original cook and of begging him, for the love of God and all the saints in heaven, to let him know exactly how he had prepared the vegetable soup which the Archbishop liked so much.

The first cook was so generous that he was quite frank with his latest successor, and he honestly confided to him the recipe for the soup, of which he had always hitherto made a mystery.

The new cook carried out the instructions given to him with the greatest care, flavoured the soup exactly according to the recipe, and had it served to the austere prelate.

As soon as the latter tasted it, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and finished his plate of vegetable soup with the greatest relish. Then he said enthusiastically:

" Thanks be to Almighty God! At last He has sent me a cook who can make soup as well as the first one, or even better. It is delicious and most appetising. Bring the cook here. I want to let him know how pleased I am with him."

The cook arrived highly delighted. The Archbishop received him most affably and graciously, and praised his talent up to the skies.

The artist of the kitchen was so flattered that, being a really honest, sincere, and good Christian, he decided to give his kind master a proof not only of his abilities in his professional domain, but also of high moral qualities, on which he prided himself even more than on his merely material functions.

So the new cook said to the Archbishop:

" Your Grace, in spite of the profound respect which I have for you, I think it my duty to tell you that your former cook deceived you, and that it is not right that I should follow his bad example. This soup does not consist only of peas and beans. All that was an untruth; the flavour of the soup is due to a rich stock made up of pieces of ham, chickens' breasts, livers and kidneys of small birds, and the most delicate morsels of mutton. You see, your Grace, how he deceived you."

The Archbishop looked fixedly at his cook, and shaking his finger at him with a smile in which disappointment and amusement were mingled, he said:

" In that case, you rascal, you had better keep up the deception! "

JUAN VALERA

THE ELOQUENT BASQUE

More than a hundred years ago the Bishop of Malaga was a man noted for his knowledge and virtue, and a very eloquent preacher. He was also agreeable in person, and his manner was so affable and gracious that he permitted his subordinates to chat with him, and even to make jokes, not only not being annoyed, but even enjoying their conversation.

The Bishop was a Basque, and his friends, in praising his eloquence to the skies, said that it was extraordinary and unique among the sons of the provinces of Biscay, where, according to them there had never been a man who could speak two words of sense, or a priest who was not a dunce and quite incapable of expressing himself in the pulpit.

The good prelate, urged by his Christian modesty, maintained with patriotic fervour that they were wrong, and he asserted that among the Basque priests, his contemporaries, there were at least three dozen who were superior to him in knowledge, skill, and inspiration for composing sermons.

As time passed and no Basque priest was ever sent to that diocese, the dispute appeared never likely to be settled. The Bishop did not give any proof of his assertions by any practical test, and his friends continued wrongly or rightly denying to all Basque clerics, except to his Lordship himself, any capacity whatever for sacred oratory.

At last, however, there arrived in Malaga in search of help and patronage a priest from the Basque province of Guipuzcoa, who had made his studies in the very same seminary as the Bishop himself and had been his greatest friend there. The Bishop received him cordially and made him stay in his palace. When they were alone together, the good Bishop lost no time in telling his old friend of the interminable discussions which he had with the others of his acquaintance, and then he said to him: "It is very lucky that you have come here, because now I can make use of you to prove the truth of my contention. This day week there will be a great ceremony in the cathedral, and you must preach at it. See that your sermon is so eloquent and edifying that it

will eclipse, obscure, and reduce to insignificance everything that I have ever composed."

"But how can I do that?" asked the poor priest in dismay. "You know very well that I am anything but learned, and so little able to preach that I have never dared to mount the pulpit in my life."

"God is good and He can do anything," calmly replied the Bishop. "Put your trust in God and do not doubt that on this occasion He will perform a great miracle in your favour and in mine."

Trusting in the Divine Goodness and more inspired than ever, the Bishop, denying himself to all visitors, shut himself up carefully in his study, and that evening wrote a real masterpiece, an absolutely perfect discourse, perhaps the best which he had ever written in all his life.

The following morning he gave the sermon to his friend the priest, enjoining him to learn it thoroughly by heart.

Thoroughly alarmed and despondent lest he should not be able to commit the sermon to memory, or should forget it after he had learned it, our priest (so anxious was he to please his good patron) spent two whole days in learning each word by heart and then, without hesitating or pausing, he recited it like a parrot to the Bishop. Two other days were spent in teaching the budding preacher the intonation, the expression, and the movement of the hands, so eloquent in Spanish preaching, that must correspond with the spoken word.

The Bishop was now quite satisfied. He considered the discourse pronounced by his friend admirable, and anticipated both for himself and for his disciple an overwhelming triumph.

Next, he announced that the preacher would be a compatriot of his, and full of patriotic pride he said to his friends:

"Now you will see something good. You will have to admit that this humble priest of my race and from my town is a better preacher than I am. He is a modern St. John Chrysostom, a torrent of eloquence and a well of wisdom. In future you need not tease me by saying that with the exception of myself there is no Basque who can preach."

They were all full of impatience, longing to hear the Basque preacher. At last the day and hour of the ceremony came. The cathedral was crammed to its very corners. The Bishop and the canons sat in state in the choir, surrounded by all the pomp which befitted the circumstances. In the centre of the edifice and not far from the pulpit the ladies of high society and greatest piety in the city were assembled, most of them very pretty and elegant in their graceful robes and lace mantillas, with roses, pinks, and other flowers in their hair. The humbler classes, both men and women,

filled the naves. In fact, the curiosity to hear the new preacher was universal and most remarkable, seeing that his fame as an orator had been industriously spread abroad by the Bishop.

At last our Basque appeared in the pulpit and began his sermon with so much grace and interest that the admiration, the surprise, and the holy joy which filled all hearts were manifest throughout the great building. But alas and alack! About half-way through the sermon, fate, or rather Divine Providence, willed that the preacher, in spite of his careful study, forgot what was to come next. He perspired, stopped short, wrung his hands, all in vain. No doubt he would have to leave the pulpit with his sermon half finished. The discredit and the lack of prestige would be awful. And the worst thing was that the sermon was interrupted at the very moment of most thrilling interest, when the preacher was describing the misfortunes which God had sent to afflict our nation, either as a chastening means or to punish our many sins.

In his frantic despair the Basque lost his head completely, and turning to the Bishop who sat watching him on his throne, began to make a furious attack on him with the intimacy of a former fellow-student. Luckily in his excitement he made use of his native Basque, which not another soul in the cathedral except the Bishop understood. He uttered prayers and reproaches in the sonorous unknown tongue, he denounced him as a false friend who had placed him in this terrible position, which was certain to be his ruin and would oblige him to abandon the holy office of the priesthood in disgrace.

Who knows if it was a miracle of the Almighty? What is certain is that all at once, when he had relieved his soul of the venom of his bitterness against the Archbishop in the language which only they two could understand, not only did he remember all the rest of the sermon from the point where he had left off, but he was moved by a marvellous inspiration, and he exclaimed:

"The words which I have just uttered, my brethren, are taken from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and are the expression of his affliction."

And then, happy in having recovered his thread, he went on with real eloquence and complete self-possession to finish his admirable discourse. The whole congregation was edified and amazed. The Bishop had proved that there were Basques who could preach as well as he could. Everywhere the praise of the priest resounded, not only as a most eloquent preacher, but also as a most learned man, for had he not quoted an impassioned passage from the Sacred Scriptures entirely by heart in the original Hebrew?

PEDRO A. DE ALARCÓN

1833–1891

THE TALL WOMAN

I

"WHAT do we know, my friends? What do we know?" exclaimed Gabriel, the distinguished mining engineer, sitting down under a pine tree and near a fountain, on the slope of Guadarrama, about six miles from the Escurial Palace and just on the boundary line between the provinces of Madrid and Segovia. Well do I know the place, the fountain, and the pine tree. I can see them still, but I cannot remember the name.

"Let us all sit down and rest here," said Gabriel. "We have agreed to enjoy the lovely weather as best we can in this charming place, famous for the tonic qualities of this sparkling fountain and for the picnics which have taken place here, where great scientists have come to observe Nature and to find an appetite from time to time. Yes, sit down and I will tell you a true story to bear out my theory. You call me a materialist, but still I maintain that in this world in which we live strange things happen—things so strange that no reason can account for them, nor can science or philosophy give any explanation of such things. Surely there are more mysteries in heaven and on earth than all our philosophy can account for, slightly to alter the words of Hamlet."

Gabriel addressed this lively speech to five friends of various ages, none of them very young and only one elderly. Three of them like him were mining engineers, the fourth was an artist, and the fifth something of a writer. All of them had come up with Gabriel, who was the youngest, on hired mules from the village of San Lorenzo, to spend the day in hunting for specimens in the lovely woods of Peguerinos, gathering interesting forest plants under the pine trees, catching butterflies in gauze nets, finding rare beetles under the bark of the decayed trees, and in all these occupations giving a fair amount of attention to the well-filled hamper of cold provisions and the skin of wine to the cost of which all had contributed in equal shares.

This was in the middle of the hot summer of 1875. I am not sure if it was the festival of Santiago or that of San Luis, but it was

a holiday of some sort—I think San Luis. In any case, the day was very hot, and the shade of the pine wood and murmur of the fountain were delicious after climbing the mountain-side. Up there, mind, heart, body, and especially appetite were refreshed by the pure air and the stillness, so sweet after the busy life of the plains which we had left so far below us.

The six friends sat under the shade of the pine trees, and Gabriel continued as follows:

" You may call me a visionary if you like, but it has been my fortune or misfortune through life that I have ever been regarded as a materialist, a man of modern thought, not believing in things unseen, in fact, a positivist! Yes, I may be so, but my positivism includes an acknowledgment of the mysterious influences of Nature —all the strange and inexplicable facts which *are* facts because they happen; all the emotions of the mind which are inseparable from the life of every reasoning creature. I believe in all these things because they are material and natural. They cannot be explained, but still they happen. Now, as to other things, which are supernatural, or extra-natural, just listen to what I am going to tell you and then judge for yourselves. I was not the hero of the strange occurrence which I am going to relate to you—but listen, and then tell me what explanation you can give me—natural, physical, scientific, whatever you think will best explain the case, if explanation be at all possible.

" Now, all of you, give me your close attention. But first of all, give me some wine. It ought to be cool enough now, for the skin has been resting under the flow of the fountain ever since we came on it. It was surely created by Providence for the use of weary and thirsty souls who come here in pursuit of science.

II

" Perhaps you may have heard of an engineer of Public Works named Telesforo de Ruiz, who died in 1860? "

" No, I never heard of him."

" Oh, yes, I have heard of him. He was an Andalusian, very dark and handsome. He was engaged to be married to the daughter of the Marquis of Moreda, and he died of gastric fever."

" Yes, that was he," replied Gabriel. " Well, about six months before he died, my friend Telesforo was a most brilliant young man, as every one said. Tall, strong, handsome, talented and with a first-class diploma from the School of Mines, and excellent prospects, he was very much sought after in the way of his profession by both public and private enterprises, and he was just as much sought after in private life by the fair sex, marriageable or unhappily married, and even by some charming widows anxious

to tempt Providence again. One of these was a well-known conquest of his, who would gladly have accompanied my friend to the altar. However, she does not enter into this story, and indeed Telesforo merely amused himself in her case by a very strong flirtation with her. If she did make herself a bit cheap to him. . . . Well, he was all the time deeply and seriously in love with the girl to whom he was engaged, poor Joaquina de Moreda, and so the poor widow merely filled a temporary gap. . . ."

"Now, now, Don Gabriel! No scandal allowed."

"I am not going to talk any scandal. Neither what I am going to tell you nor what I may ask you to say later on the subject is at all suitable for any but the most serious style of conversation. Juan, give me another glass of wine. This wine is really excellent. Well, my friends, listen with all your attention, for now I am going to begin my tale in earnest. Those of you who knew the young people will remember that poor Joaquina died suddenly when taking the waters at Santa Agueda at the end of the summer of 1859. I was in Pau when the sad news came, and I was very much affected on account of my friendship for Telesforo. I had only met the girl once, at the house of her aunt, General Lopez's widow, and her extreme pallor, of a bluish tint, struck me as an indication of weak health, such as one sees in sufferers from aneurism. But she was very graceful, refined, and gentle-looking, and in addition to her personal charms she would inherit her father's title, as she was the only child, and she would also have a good deal of money. So when I heard of her death I knew that her sweetheart would be inconsolable, and when I got back to Madrid, about three weeks later, I went to see him early one morning. He had a charming flat in the Calle del Lobo, near the Plaza San Jerónimo, and he lived there and had his office under the same roof.

"He looked very sad, but was calm, and evidently master of his grief, as he sat working with his assistants at some plan of a railway. He was dressed in deep mourning, and when I entered, he embraced me in silence, then turned to give some instructions to one of his staff respecting the work in hand. I waited until, taking my arm, he led me to his private sitting-room at the other end of the house, saying as we went:

"'I am so glad you have come. I cannot tell you how much I have missed you in my present state of mind. Something very strange and unaccountable has happened to me, and I want just to tell you about it, for only a friend who knows me as you do will be able to judge if I am mad or a fool. I certainly wish to have some sane and calm opinion such as I know that yours will be. Sit down here,' he went on when we had reached the sitting-room, 'and do not be afraid that I am going to weary you by describing the grief which afflicts me, and which can only end with my life.

You have not had much personal experience of sorrow or human suffering, but yet you can imagine what I suffer and must always suffer. I do not seek or wish for consolation now or later on, or ever in all time. That subject is ended now. What I want to tell you is something so strange, so terrible, that I must speak of it to some one of calm judgment, some one who will listen and advise me. The whole adventure is like an awful seal set on my present misery, on the agony of my life, and it tortures me to the point of despair. It is all a most frightful mystery, and I think it will alarm you too.'

"'Speak,' I replied, feeling vaguely anxious and more than half wishing that I had not come to see my unhappy friend. His expression of terror struck a chill to my heart and made me fear for his reason.

"'Listen to me, then,' said he, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

III

"'I do not know if it is a mental twist which I have always had, or if it is the effect of some of those silly tales which old nurses use to frighten children into quiet and obedience, but ever since I was very young nothing caused me so much fright and horror as the sight, or even the thought, of a woman alone out of doors at a late hour of the night.

"'I assure you that I have never been a coward. Like every other man of the world, I have always been ready to fight a duel if it became necessary to do so, and not very long after I had left the School of Mines I was obliged to quell a dangerous revolt among my workmen on my first important piece of work, by means of blows and even of shots, so that single-handed I reduced them to obedience. All my life, in Jaen, in Madrid, and elsewhere, I was accustomed to go about the streets at any hour of the night, alone and unarmed, and if by chance I did meet any late wanderers of suspicious appearance, I knew that they were merely thieves or human prowlers in search of prey, and I only avoided them or let them pass without notice. But if the solitary form was that of a woman, walking or standing, then, if I was alone, or there was no one else in sight, I was in the most abject state of terror possible to be imagined. You may laugh if you like, but my agony of mind was dreadful; I shivered from head to foot, thought of ghosts or lost souls, apparitions from the other world, wraiths of persons still alive; in fact, of all the terrible superstitious ideas which have ever been invented to torture the credulous, and which at any other time or in any other circumstances would have only provoked my ridicule. Then I hastened my steps or turned back; I

made all kinds of detours to avoid meeting the lonely figure, and overcome by repulsion and horror, I fled to my home, never stopping until I was safe within its doors.

" ' Once in the shelter of my own house, I could laugh at my silly fears, and console myself by reflecting that at any rate no one of my acquaintance knew of such folly on my part. I could feel sure then that, as I did not believe in fairies or witches or apparitions of any sort, there was no need to have been frightened by the sight of the poor solitary creature, whom want, or vice, or some other cruel spur had driven away from shelter on such a night and at such a time. I felt that I would have done better to have offered her assistance if she was in need of it, or alms, if I had waited for her to ask me for them. But all this solid reasoning did not prevent my acting in just the same way when the next solitary female form was sighted. When I was twenty-five years of age, I met many such lonely nocturnal wanderers, and though I had always fled from them in the same way, I never had the slightest reason to think that they intended me any harm or were able to injure me in any way, nor had I ever any notable or disagreeable adventure with any one I met in the street late at night. But my fear was indomitable, only vanishing when I was safe at home, and could laugh at or scold myself for my lack of common sense. If I were not alone, or if there were other people in the street, the case was different, for I did not care then. The incident attracted no one's notice, and was soon forgotten, as children forget their terrors of the dark when they have companions by their side.

" ' Now, this brings me to one night about three years ago. I have only too good reason to remember the exact date. It was the 16th of November, at three o'clock in the morning. At that time I was living in a little flat in the Calle de Jardines, near the Calle de la Montera. The night was terribly cold and wet, and I was alone. You will ask me what I was doing out of doors at that hour on a November morning. Well, you will be surprised to hear that I had just left a sort of gambling saloon, unknown as such to the police, but where many people had already been ruined. I had been induced to go there the night before for the first and last time. Gambling was never a vice of mine, and the inducement held out to me by the friend who took me there, and who was a bit of a scamp, was that I would see something of the smart night life of the capital, and make the acquaintance of some interesting members of Bohemian society and ultra-fashionable actresses and other stars of the demi-monde, who dropped in to win or lose a few crowns at roulette.

" ' Well, about midnight the fun waxed furious. People of all classes dropped in, apparently after the theatre or the late receptions of society; play grew high, and I, like all novices, threw

prudence to the winds, and staked my all, winning at first and then losing steadily, until at last, after being severely handled by cruel Fortune, I came away without a single coin in my pockets, and with debts to my friend and others, the amounts of which I had jotted down, without having any very clear idea of what they amounted to, but feeling certain that it was utterly out of my power ever to discharge them.

" ' I was going home, half dead with weariness, annoyance and disgust at my own folly, freezing with cold, and also very hungry. I did not know what to do, except to write to my poor father, who was very ill, asking him to send me money, and that would not only grieve but surprise him, for he believed that I was doing well in my profession and already in comfortable circumstances. Overcome by these sad thoughts, I was just crossing the corner of the Calle de los Peligros to reach my own street, and was about to pass a newly-erected house at the corner, when on looking up, I became aware that in the doorway, erect and still as a pine tree, stood a very tall, stout woman, about sixty years of age, whose wicked bold lashless eyes were fixed on me like two daggers, whilst her huge toothless mouth grinned at me with indescribable malignity.

" ' The terror, or rather, the mad panic, which seized on me then surpassed all I had ever experienced previously. I stood staring at this horrible figure, and each line of her form, each smallest detail of her dress, were indelibly branded in my recollection. The lamp at the street corner shone steadily on the scene, and the apparition, or whatever it might be, and I alone were the occupants of the entire street. I forgot my ruined position, I forgot my folly of that night, there was only room in my brain for one thought, if thought it could be called—a crazy terror of the woman who seemed to fill the whole doorway beside me.

" ' Oh, do not be alarmed, my friend. I was not really mad; I am not mad now. But what shall I be if some consolation is not found for me; some solution of the distress of my soul? It is for that reason that I have asked you to listen to me and to bear with me.

" ' The first surprising thing about this woman, as I must call her, was her great height and the breadth of her bony shoulders; next the size and roundness of her enormous owl-like eyes, the size of her nose, and the hideous gap which served her as a mouth, made still more hideous by the malignant grin which would have disfigured the fairest mouth in existence, and finally, the strange coquetry of her dress; the bright-coloured handkerchief which was draped over her ugly forehead and fastened beneath the chin, and a very small fan which she held open in her hand, and which she flirted in an affectation of modesty before her face and figure.

" ' Nothing could be more grotesque or ridiculous than the sight

of that tiny fan in those enormous hands, like a sceptre of weakness to a giantess so old, so bony, so hideous. The same effect was produced by the gay cotton handkerchief in contrast to the huge deformed nose, and the coarse face which made me ask myself for a moment if this were not a man in woman's dress. But no. The expression was that of a wicked woman, of a witch, of a sorceress, of one of the Fates, of a Fury. I cannot express my exact thought, but in that instant I felt that this was the cause and the justification of all the unreasonable fears which had overcome me when I had seen a woman, however innocent-looking, alone in the street at night. It would seem that, from my very birth, I had foreseen the horror of this encounter, and that I feared it by instinct, as all living creatures are given the instinct to recognise their natural enemies, even by their approach, before ever they have received any injury from them.

" ' When I saw now for the first time this sphinx of my whole life, I did not run away, less through shame or manly pride than because I dreaded unreasoningly that my very fear would reveal to the creature that it was I, her victim, who fled, and would give her wings to pursue me, to seize me, to . . . I could not tell what I feared. Panic is a thing of itself, and has no form of thought even to shape the thing it fears or to put into words its own madness.

" ' The house where I lived was at the extreme end of the street, which, as you know, is very long and narrow. Not another soul was to be seen. I was alone, utterly alone, with that awful statue-like figure, which might annihilate me with a word. How was I to get away, to get home? I looked along to where I saw the broad well-lighted Calle de la Montera, where policemen and watchmen are on beat at all times.

" ' Finally, I do not remember how, I resolved to do something to escape from the horrible obsession which dominated me—not to take to flight, but to creep by degrees down the street, even at the cost of years of life and health, to get away, to get nearer to my home, if I did not fall dead on the ground before reaching it.

" ' I had moved thus slowly about twenty steps along the street towards my house, when all at once a new spasm of terror seized me. I did not dare to stop, I could not look round, but what if my enemy were following me. Dared I look round? I stopped and tried to reason calmly.

" ' " One or other thing must happen," thought I with the speed of lightning. " Either I have good cause for this fear, or else it is sheer madness. In the first case, this terrible witch is following me, she will overtake me, and nothing in the whole world can save me. But if this is only a craze, a mania, an access of folly, a groundless

panic, then let me face it out, convince myself of its unreality, and thus be cured once for all, and never have to suffer in this way again. I shall feel certain of my silly conduct if I find that this poor old woman is still standing in the doorway sheltering from cold, or waiting for the door to be opened. Then I shall go home, and never again will I permit such groundless fears to torment me."

" ' Having almost calmed myself by this forced reasoning, I stood still and turned my head.

" ' Oh, Gabriel, Gabriel, how shall I convey my feelings to you at what I saw? The tall woman had followed me with soundless footsteps, she was towering over me, almost touching me with her fan, her head was bent so as nearly to touch my shoulder.

" ' Why? Ah, why, indeed? Was she a pickpocket? Was it a man in disguise? Or was it only a spiteful old woman, who saw that I was frightened and wanted to terrify me more? Was it the spectral reflection of my own cowardice? Was it the sum total of all the deceptions and shortcomings of our human nature?

" ' To tell you all the ideas which ran through my mind at that moment would be impossible. I managed to utter a shriek, which roused me from my stupor as from a nightmare, and I ran like a terrified child of four years old and did not stop until I was in the Calle de la Montera.

" ' Once there, all my fear fell away from me. And yet the Calle de la Montera was deserted too. I looked all along the Calle de los Jardines, the whole of which I could see, and which was sufficiently well lighted by its three lamp-posts and by the reflection from the Calle de Peligros. It would not be possible for the tall woman to hide if she had gone in that direction, but I give you my word there was not a cat or the shadow of a mouse to be seen in the whole street, not to speak of a giantess like my tormentor.

" ' " She has gone into some other doorway," I thought. " But she will not be able to get away without my seeing her if she moves while the lamps are lit."

" ' Just then I saw a night-watchman coming along the Calle del Caballero de Gracia, and I called him without moving from where I stood. To explain my call and put him on the alert, I told him that there was a man disguised as a woman in the Calle de Jardines, that he had gone into that street by the Calle de los Peligros, and must have gone off towards the Calle de la Aduana; that I would remain where I was if he would go to the other end of the street, and that in that way he would not be able to escape. It would be well for us both to capture him, I said, for he must be a robber or other bad character to go about disguised at that hour.

" ' The night-watchman did as I advised. He went down to the Calle de la Aduana, and when I saw his lantern gleam at the other

end of the Calle de los Jardines I went along the other side and down the next street to meet him.

" ' Neither of us had seen anything in the shape of a human being, although both of us had looked into the doorway of every house.

" ' " He must have gone into some house," said the watchman.

" ' " I expect so," I replied, opening my own door, with the firm determination to change to another street next day.

" ' I ascended the stairs to my flat on the third floor, and opened the outer door with my latch-key. I never made my good servant José sit up for me.

" ' However, this time, he was waiting up for me. My troubles were not over yet.

" ' " Is there anything wrong? " I asked him in surprise.

" ' He seemed rather agitated.

" ' " Sir," he said, " Captain Falcón was here from eleven o'clock until half-past two. He said he would come back after daylight, and that if you came back, you were to wait up for him, as he must see you."

" ' Those words filled me with new terrors. I felt as if my own death were at hand. Certainly something very serious was on foot. My dear old father had been very ill for a long time, and as he had seemed to be much worse lately, I had written to my brothers in Jaen, where all my family lived, that if matters became very serious they were to telegraph to my friend, Captain Falcón, who would let me know at once what had happened. I had no doubt now that my father was dead.

" ' I sat in an arm-chair, awaiting the dawn and my friend, who was to be the bearer of sad news. How can I express what I suffered in those long hours of waiting. Three things, all of terribly painful association, kept repeating themselves in my mind, as being inextricably connected with one another, standing apart from the rest of the world in a monstrous and terrifying group: my ruin at play, the meeting with the tall woman, and the death of my honoured father!

" ' When six o'clock struck, Captain Falcón entered my sitting-room, and looked at me in silence. I flung myself into his arms in a hysterical outburst, and he said, essaying to calm my grief:

" ' " Weep, my friend. You have indeed cause to weep, for such a loss as this can only come once in a lifetime." '

IV

" My friend Telesforo," continued Gabriel, after he had drained another goblet of wine, " paused when he reached this point of his story, and after a silence of some minutes went on as follows:

" ' If this were all I had to tell you, you might not find anything strange or supernatural in it, and you might tell me what others have told me; men of much common sense of my acquaintance to whom I have spoken of it; that every person of lively and ardent imagination has his or her pet subject of unreasoning terror; that mine was the idea of solitary female night-walkers, and that the old woman in the Calle de Jardines was only some poor old creature who tried to ask me for alms when she was without home or food, and whom I had alarmed by my own strange demeanour; that at the worst, she could only be some associate of thieves or other bad characters, waiting in a quiet street for her companions, and fearful of their being discovered by the night-watchman.

" ' I, too, wished to believe this, and after hearing it constantly repeated, I did almost come to believe it at the end of some months. Still I would have given years of my life for the certainty of never again seeing the tall woman! And now I would give everything I have just to be able to see her once more! '

" ' But why? '

" ' Just to be able to strangle her! '

" ' I don't understand.'

" ' You will understand when I tell you that I met her again three weeks ago, a few hours before I received the fatal news of the death of my poor Joaquina.'

" ' Well, tell me about it.'

" ' There is not much more to tell. It was about five o'clock in the morning, and I had been to an entertainment where I had not been much entertained. I had the unpleasant task of breaking the news of my approaching marriage to a lady with whom I had had a very pronounced flirtation, and who took the news very ill. I had to stand many reproaches and even tears from the charming young widow when I explained that the position was inevitable; my resolution was taken, and my wedding-day fixed. At that moment, though I did not know it, they were burying my promised wife in Santa Agueda.

" ' It was not yet daylight, but there was that faint light in the sky which shows that night is weakening. The street lamps had been extinguished and the watchmen had retired, when, as I was passing by the Plaza de las Cortes to get to my flat in the Calle del Lobo, at the corner of the Calle de Santa Ana, who should cross my path but the terrible woman whom I had seen in the Calle de Jardines.

" ' She did not look at me, and I thought she had not seen me. The same dress, even the same little fan as when I saw her three years ago. And all my previous terror was as nothing in comparison with what took possession of me now. I walked quickly down the Calle del Prado after she had passed, but I did not take my eyes

off her to make sure that she did not turn her head; and when I reached the other part of the Calle del Lobo I breathed hard as if I had just breasted an impetuous stream, and my fear giving way to satisfaction, I pressed on, thinking that I had narrowly but completely escaped the notice of the hateful witch, and that now I was free from her baleful proximity.

" ' But just as I was about to enter my house a new terror arose. Surely she was too cunning to allow me to escape like this, and she was only feigning not to notice me in order to be able to track me with more certainty down the dark and silent street and thus find where I lived.

" ' I stopped and looked round. There she was just behind me, her dress almost touching me, her wicked eyes fixed on me, her hideous mouth distended in a spiteful grin of triumph, as she fanned herself with an air of languor, as though ridiculing my childish terror.

" ' That fear gave place at once to the most senseless fury, to the rage of desperation, and I flung myself on the vile creature, seized her by the arms and dashed her against the wall. I held her back by the throat, and rained blows on her until I was obliged to desist, in the conviction that I was really dealing with a human being and a woman.

" ' She had uttered a hoarse cry of mingled pain and rage, and pretended to weep, but I felt that it was but pretence; and then fixing her hyena eyes on me, she said:

" ' " Why do you treat me like this? "

" ' My anger died away and my fear returned.

" ' " Do you not remember," I said, " that you have seen me elsewhere? "

" ' " Indeed I do," she replied sardonically. " The night of San Eugenio, about three o'clock, in the Calle de Jardines."

" ' I shivered involuntarily, but I still kept hold of her.

" ' " Who are you? " I asked. " Why do you run after me like this? What do you want with me? "

" ' " I am only a poor weak woman," said she with a diabolical grin. " You hate and fear me without cause or reason. If not, will you please tell me why you were so overcome with fear the first time you saw me? "

" ' " Because I have hated you ever since I was born," I cried involuntarily. " Because you are the evil spirit of my life! "

" ' " So that you have known me for a long time past? Well, my son, I have known you too."

" ' " You have known me? Since when? "

" ' " Before you were born. And when I saw you pass close to me three years ago, I said to myself: ' Here he is at last! ' "

" ' " But what am I to you? What are you to me? "

" ' " I am the devil," she said, spitting in my face. And with that she suddenly slipped from my grasp, caught up her skirts, and ran from my sight without making the least noise as she disappeared.

" ' It would have been madness to try to overtake her. And it was now broad daylight and a good many people were passing in the streets, both in San Jerónimo Square and in the Calle del Prado. The tall woman continued to run, or as it seemed to fly, until she reached the Calle de las Huertas, now all gleaming in the morning sun. She stopped there and looked back at me, waving her fan at me in a threatening manner, holding it closed like a dagger, and finally she disappeared round the corner of the last street.

" ' No, just wait a moment, Gabriel. Do not give me your opinion yet, for I have not quite finished my strange tale, in which my heart and my life are equally involved. Listen to me for a few minutes longer!

" ' When I reached home, whom do you think I found awaiting me but Colonel Falcón, as he is now, and he had come to bring me the terrible news that my love, my darling Joaquina, all my hope of happiness and good fortune on this earth, had died the day before in Santa Agueda! Her unhappy father had telegraphed to Falcón, knowing what an old friend of ours he was, asking him to break the news to me . . . to me, who had guessed that a great misfortune was in store for me as soon as ever I set eyes on the curse of my life. Now you know why I want to kill the enemy of my happiness, my born foe, that wicked old sorceress, who is the embodiment of the cruelty of my destiny.

" ' But why do I talk like this? Is she really a woman? Is she a human being at all? Why did the presentiment of her existence weigh on me ever since I was born? Why did she *recognise* me when she saw me first? Why have I only seen her when some great misfortune has happened to me? Is it the apparition of Satan? Is it Death? Is it Life itself, for me, with misery? Is it Antichrist? What or who is it? '

V

" Well, my dear friends, I leave you to imagine what remarks I made and what arguments I used in the effort to calm Telesforo, for all that I said was just the same as you are all thinking now and preparing to tell me, so as to prove to me that there is nothing superhuman or supernatural in my story. You will tell me more than that . . . you will say that my poor friend was not in his right mind; that he must have been always a little mad, for he evidently suffered from the moral infirmity which specialists call groundless panic, or as the case may be, intermittent delirium; that even

admitting that all that he said about the strange woman was quite true, still it was only a case of a singular series of chance coincidences of dates and events; and that perhaps the poor old woman was mad too, and was excited by his mania. She might have been an old rat-catcher abroad at her nightly work, or a beggar, or even a self-styled witch, as the hero of my tale said to himself in an interval of lucidity and common sense."

"That is about the truth," said the companions of Gabriel in different ways. "We have all had that idea, and we were just about to express it to you."

"Well, just listen to me for a moment, and you will see that I was wrong in thinking that, as you are wrong now. The only person who was not wrong was Telesforo. Ah! it is much easier to talk of madness than to find an explanation of many things which happen on this earth."

"Go on, tell us the rest!"

"I am going to do so, and this chapter, as it is the last, will be related to you without even a preliminary glass of wine.

VI

"A few days after this conversation with Telesforo I was obliged to go to the province of Albacete in my capacity of mining engineer; and not many weeks later I heard from a contractor of public works that my poor friend had been attacked by a very severe gastric fever and jaundice. He was green in hue, unable to move from his chair, and he could not work, nor would he see any one. His grief and melancholy were pitiable, and the doctors despaired of his recovery. Then I knew why he had not answered my letters, and I applied to my old friend, Colonel Falcón, for news. What he told me was ever more and more depressing.

"After five months of absence, I returned to Madrid on the very day when the news of the battle of Tetuan arrived. I remember it as if it were yesterday. That evening I bought the *Correspondencia de España* to see the news, and the first thing my eye lighted on was the obituary notice of my poor friend Telesforo, and the invitation to all his friends to attend his funeral on the following day.

"You will readily understand that I would not willingly fail to show him this last poor tribute. I had a place in one of the carriages nearest to the hearse, and when we alighted in the cemetery of San Luis I noticed a woman of the poorer class, old and very tall, who laughed in a most unseemly manner when the hearse arrived, and who then advanced with an air of triumph towards the pall-bearers, pointing out to them with a very small fan the way they were to take to reach the open grave, which was to be my friend's last resting-place.

" At the first glance I recognised, with grief and fear, that this woman corresponded to the description given by Telesforo of his implacable enemy. She was just what he had described, with her enormous nose, her infernal eyes, her hideous mouth, the bright printed cotton handkerchief over her head, and the tiny fan, which in her hands seemed to be the sceptre of profanity and inhuman mockery.

" She perceived at once that I was looking at her, and she fixed her eyes on me in a peculiar way, as if recognising me whilst she ascertained that I recognised her. I felt that she knew that my dead friend had told me all about the scenes in the Calle de Jardines and the Calle del Lobo. She seemed to send me a challenge, to declare that I had inherited the hatred she had borne to my unfortunate friend.

" I confess that the fear which overcame me was greater than the surprise which I felt at this new coincidence or disaster. It seemed to me to be certain that some mysterious connection had existed in some supernatural way between the appalling old woman and Telesforo previous to this life; but at that moment I saw that my own life, my own good fortune, my own soul even, were in danger if I was to inherit this strange and terrible animosity from beyond the grave.

" The tall woman began to laugh, pointing at me mockingly with her fan, as if she had read my thoughts and wished every one to notice my cowardice. I was obliged to lean on the arm of a friend to avoid falling to the ground, and then she made a gesture of contempt or pity, turned on her heels, and walked into the churchyard, still looking at me with her head turned over her shoulder. She fanned herself and signed to me with the fan at one and the same time, walking with mincing steps among the tombs with a sort of infernal coquetry, until at last I saw her disappear for ever in the crowded heart of that great world of the dead.

" I say ' for ever,' because fifteen years have passed since then, and I have never seen her since that moment. If she was really a human being, she must be dead by now; and if she were not, if she were a supernatural creature, I feel sure that she must have scorned me too much to persecute me.

" Now, my friends! I have told you all I know. Let me have your opinion as to such strange facts. Do you think that they are quite natural? "

. . . . . .

It is needless for me, the narrator of the strange story which I then heard and which I have just given you to read, to repeat the remarks made by the group of friends and comrades to Gabriel. For indeed the fact remains that every reader will have to use his

own judgment as to the conclusion to which he comes, and to his own ideas and beliefs in the matter.

So I will say no more. I leave it to the judgment of every one of my readers to solve a mystery which has never been solved to my satisfaction or that of any other person who considered the strange case. And if it must ever remain a mystery, then I have only to address the most affectionate and faithful greeting to each of the five others who with me spent that unforgettable day on the shady slope of the pine-wooded hill of Guadarrama.

VALDEMORO, *August* 25, 1881.

PEDRO A. DE ALARCÓN

THE PATRIOT TRAITOR

In the little village of Padrón, in Galician territory,[1] about the year 1808, a certain García of Paredes sold toads and snakes and rain-water for fortune-telling, in addition to his regular business as an apothecary. He was a misanthropic bachelor, a descendant, most likely, of that illustrious man who killed a bull with one blow of his fist.

It was a cold and mournful night in autumn. The sky was overcast by dense clouds, and the entire absence of earthly light left the darkness to hold its own in all the streets and plazas of the town.

About ten on that dreadful night, which the unhappy circumstances of the country made much more sinister, there arrived in the plaza, which to-day is called Plaza of the Constitution, a silent group of shadows, even darker than the obscurity of heaven and earth. These shadows advanced toward the drug-store of García of Paredes, which had been completely closed since the ringing of the "Bells for the Departed," or since exactly half-past eight.

"What shall we do?" said one of the shades in exceedingly correct Galician.

"Nobody has seen us," observed another.

"Let us break down the door!" proposed a woman.

"And kill them!" murmured as many as fifteen voices.

"I will take charge of the apothecary!" exclaimed a boy.

"We'll all look after him!"

"For being a Jew!"

"For taking the part of the French!"

"They say that to-day more than twenty Frenchmen are supping with him."

"Indeed I believe it! As they know they are safe here they have come in a crowd."

"Ah, if it was in my house! Three lodgers have I thrown into the well!"

"My wife decapitated one yesterday!"

[1] *Galicia*, formerly a kingdom and afterwards a province in the northwest of Spain.

" And I," said a friar with a coarse voice, " I have asphyxiated two captains by leaving lighted charcoal in their cell, which had been mine! "

" And that infamous apothecary protects them! "

" How respectful he was yesterday when he was walking with those vile outcasts! "

" Who would have expected it of García of Paredes? Not a month ago he was the most valiant, the most patriotic, the greatest royalist of the village."

" Yes, how he sold in his shop portraits of Prince Ferdinand! "

" And now he sells pictures of Napoleon! "

" He used to excite us to defence against the invaders——"

" And since they came to Padrón he has gone over to them! "

" And to-night he gives a supper to all the chiefs! "

" Hear what a noise they are making! It is well they do not cry, ' Long live the Emperor! ' "

" Have patience," murmured the friar. " It is still very early."

" Let us let them get drunk," said an old woman. " Then we will enter—and not one shall remain alive! "

" I say let us quarter the apothecary! "

" Cut him into eighths, if you wish! A sympathiser with the French is more odious than a Frenchman. The Frenchman treads a foreign country under foot; the French sympathiser sells and dishonours his native land. The Frenchman commits an assassination; the French partisan is a parricide! "

While the foregoing scene was taking place at the door of the apothecary's shop, García of Paredes and his fellow-revellers were indulging in the merriest and most unbridled gluttony imaginable.

There were twenty of the Frenchmen whom the druggist had at his table, and all of them were chiefs and officers.

García of Paredes was forty-five years old; he was tall and withered and yellower than a mummy; one would say his skin was long since dead; his forehead reached to the nape of his neck, thanks to the shining baldness that had something phosphorescent about it; his dull, black eyes, set deep in fleshless hollows, were like those lakes, shut in by mountains, that offer only darkness, dizziness, and death to whoever gazes into them; lakes that reflect nothing; that sometimes roar sullenly, but without suffering any change; that devour everything that falls upon their surface; that return nothing; that nobody has been able to sound; that are fed by no river and for which the imagination seeks a bottom in the ocean of the antipodes.

The supper was abundant, the wine good, the conversation cheerful and animated. The Frenchmen laughed, swore, blasphemed, sang, smoked, ate, and drank, all at the same time.

One of them told about the secret love-affairs of Napoleon; another, about the night of the Second of May in Madrid; another, the battles of the Pyramids; and still another, the execution of Louis XVI.

García of Paredes drank, laughed, and chatted like the others, or perhaps more than they; and so eloquent was he in favour of the Imperial cause, that the soldiers of Cæsar would have embraced him, have applauded him, have improvised songs in his honour.

" Sirs," the apothecary had said, " the war which we Spaniards make against you is as foolish as it is purposeless. You, sons of the Revolution, come to draw Spain from her traditional abasement, to free her from prejudice, to dissipate religious darkness, to better her antique customs, to teach us those useful and incontrovertible truths, that there is no God, no after-life, that penitence, fasting, chastity, and the other catholic virtues are quixotic foolishness, unsuited to a civilised people, and that Napoleon is the true messiah, the redeemer of the people, the friend of the human race. Sirs! May the Emperor live as long as I desire that he may live! "

" Bravo! Hurrah! " exclaimed the men of the Second of May.

The apothecary bent his forehead with unspeakable anguish.

Soon he lifted it, as strong and as serene as before. He drank a glass of wine, and continued:

" An ancestor of mine, a García of Paredes, a barbarian, a Samson, a Hercules, a Milo of Crotona, killed two hundred Frenchmen in one day—I believe it was in Italy. You see, he was not so fond of the French as I! He acquitted himself valiantly in the wars against the Moors of the kingdom of Granada; the Catholic King himself made him a knight, and he mounted guard more than once in the Quirinal, when our uncle, Alexander Borgia, was Pope. Oh, you didn't think I had such illustrious ancestry! For this Diego García of Paredes, this forebear of mine—who has as a descendant an apothecary—took Cosenza and Manfredonia, entered Cerinola by assault, and did good work at the battle of Pavía. There we took prisoner a King of France, whose sword was in Madrid nearly three centuries, until it was taken from us three months ago by that son of an innkeeper who comes at your head, and whom they call Murat."

Here the druggist paused again. Some of the French seemed to want to reply to him; but he, arising and imposing on all silence by his attitude, seized a glass convulsively and exclaimed with a voice of thunder:

" I drink your health, gentlemen, and may my ancestor be cursed, for he was a beast and he is now in the depths of hell. Long live the Frenchmen of Francis I. and of Napoleon Bonaparte! "

" Long live they! " responded the invaders, with great satisfaction. And all emptied their glasses.

Just then they heard a noise in the street, or rather, at the door of the shop.

" Did you hear? " asked the French.

García of Paredes smiled.

" They come to kill me," he said.

" Who? "

" My neighbours of Padrón."

" Why? "

" Because I sympathise with the French. For some nights they have surrounded my house. But what difference is it to us? Let us go on with our feast."

" Yes, let us go on! " exclaimed the revellers. " We are here to defend you."

And striking bottles against bottles, rather than glasses against glasses, " Long live Napoleon! Death to Ferdinand! Death to Galicia! " they cried together.

García of Paredes hoped that the health-drinking would quiet them, and murmured in a sad tone:

" Celedonio! "

The clerk stuck his pale, frightened face through a door without daring to enter the cavern.

" Celedonio, bring paper and ink," said the apothecary tranquilly.

The boy returned with writing materials.

" Sit down," continued his master. " Now, write the figures which I am going to give you. Divide them into two columns. At the top of the right column put ' Debit,' and at the top of the other, ' Credit.' "

" Sir," trembled the clerk, " at the door there is a tumult. They cry, ' Death to the apothecary! ' And they demand entrance."

" Be quiet and let them alone! Write what I have told you."

The French smiled with admiration to see the druggist occupied in adjusting accounts while death and ruin hovered near him. Celedonio raised his head and made ready his pen, waiting for the figures to put down.

" Let us see, gentlemen," said García of Paredes, addressing his table-companions. " I want you to help me continue our feast with a single toast. Let us begin in order of seats at table. You, captain, tell me, how many Spaniards have you killed since you crossed the Pyrenees? "

" Bravo! Magnificent idea! " exclaimed the Frenchmen.

" I," said the man addressed, sitting up and pulling his moustache petulantly; " I have killed, personally, with my sword—oh, put it at ten or twelve."

" Eleven on the right! " cried the druggist to his clerk.

The clerk repeated, after writing:

" Debit, eleven."

" Go on," continued the host; " and you, M. Julius? "

" I, six! "

" And you, commandant? "

" I, twenty! "

" I, eight! "

" I, fourteen! "

" I, none! "

" I do not know—I have shot blindly."

So each answered as his turn came. And the clerk went on putting down figures on the right.

" Let us see now, captain," continued García of Paredes; " we begin again with you. How many Spaniards do you expect to kill in the rest of the war, supposing it lasts, say, three years? "

" Oh! " answered the captain, " who can estimate that? "

" Calculate it, I beg of you."

" Put another eleven! "

" Eleven to the left," dictated García of Paredes. And Celedonio repeated:

" Credit, eleven."

" And you? " asked the druggist in the same order he had before followed.

" I, fifteen! "

" I, twenty! "

" I, one hundred! "

" I—a thousand! "

So answered the Frenchmen.

" Put them all down at ten, Celedonio," murmured the druggist ironically. " Now add up the columns separately."

The poor youth, who had written the figures with drops of deadly sweat upon him, was obliged to add on his fingers, like old women, so great was his terror.

At the end of a space of horrible silence he said to his master:

" Debit, 285. Credit, 200."

" That is to say," added García of Paredes, " two hundred and eighty-five dead, and two hundred sentenced. Total, four hundred and eighty-five victims."

And he pronounced these words in so deep and sepulchral a voice that the Frenchmen looked at each other in alarm.

Meanwhile the apothecary was settling a new account.

" We are heroes! " he exclaimed on finishing it. " We have drunk seventy bottles, or perhaps a hundred and five and a half measures of wine, which, divided among twenty-one—for each has

done his share—gives five measures to each man. I repeat, we are heroes! "

With this the panels of the door cracked, and the boy, tottering, stammered:

" Now they are entering! "

" What hour is it? " asked the apothecary with the greatest tranquillity.

" Eleven. But don't you hear them breaking in? "

" Let them. *It is now the hour!* "

" The hour? For what? " murmured the Frenchmen, trying to rise.

But they were so drunk that they could not rise from their chairs.

" Let them enter! " they called in drunken tones, drawing their swords with difficulty and without succeeding in standing. " Let the rabble enter! We will receive them! "

With this there sounded below, in the shop, the noise of the vessels and phials which the people were breaking, and upon the stairway sounded the unanimous and terrible cry:

" Death to the French sympathiser! "

García of Paredes arose, as if impelled by a spring, on hearing that noise within his house, and supported himself by the table, so as not to fall again into his chair. He threw around him a look of inexpressible joy and showed upon his lips the immortal smile of one who triumphs. Thus, transfigured and beautiful, with the trembling of death and of enthusiasm upon him, he uttered the following words, broken and solemn as strokes of a knell of agony:

" Frenchmen! If any of you or all of you should find occasion propitious for avenging the death of two hundred and eighty-five compatriots and for saving the life of two hundred others in addition; if by sacrificing your existence you might placate the insulted shades of your ancestors, punish the murderers of two hundred and eighty-five heroes, and free from death two hundred brothers, thus augmenting the hosts of the patriot army with two hundred champions of national independence, would you look for even a moment at your own miserable life? Would you hesitate an instant in embracing, like Samson, the column of the temple and dying, as the price of slaying the enemies of God? "

" What does he say? " the Frenchmen questioned.

" Sir, the assassins are in the ante-room! " cried Celedonio.

" Let them enter! " called García of Paredes. " Open the door of the parlour for them! Let them all come—to see how a descendant of a soldier of Pavía shall die! "

The Frenchmen, astonished, stupid, held to their chairs by an insupportable lethargy, believing that the death of which the Spaniard spoke was going to enter the room in the wake of the rioters, made mighty efforts to lift the swords which were lying on

the table; but they could not succeed with their weak fingers in even grasping the hilts. It seemed that the iron adhered to the board by an insurmountable force of attraction.

At this point more than fifty men and women, armed with sticks, daggers, and pistols, yelling, and with flashing eyes rushed into the room.

"Let them all die!" screamed some women who entered first.

"*Stop!*" cried García of Paredes with such a voice, such an attitude, such a look, that the cry added to the immovability and silence of the French and imposed cold terror on the crowd, which was not looking for that unresisting and mournful reception.

"You need not flourish your daggers," continued the apothecary in a failing voice. "I have done more than all of you for the independence of the Fatherland. I have pretended to be a French sympathiser! And you see—the twenty chiefs and officers, the invaders—twenty—do not touch them! *They are poisoned!*"

A cry at once of terror and admiration arose from the hearts of the Spaniards. They took another step toward the revellers, and found that the greater number were already dead, with head fallen forward, arms extended upon the table, and hand stiffened on sword-hilt. The others were in the agony of death.

"Long live García of Paredes!" cried the Spaniards, surrounding the dying hero.

"Celedonio," murmured the apothecary. "The opium—has run out. Send for opium—to Coruña."

And he fell upon his knees.

Then his neighbours of Padrón realised that the apothecary also was poisoned.

Now one could see a picture that was as sublime as it was terrible. Women, seated on the ground, sustained on their laps and in their arms the dying patriot, being the first to overwhelm him with caresses and blessings, as they had been first in seeking his death. The men had collected the lights of the table and, kneeling, they held them above that patriotic, tender group. Finally in the shadow lay twenty dead or dying men, some of them falling now and then with a fearful heaviness.

And at each death sigh that was heard, at each falling of a Frenchman to earth, a glorious smile lighted the face of García of Paredes, whose spirit shortly returned to heaven, blessed by a minister of the Lord, and mourned by his brothers of his own land.

PEDRO A. DE ALARCÓN

THE CORNET PLAYER

Where there's a will there's a way

I

"Don Basilio, play the cornet and we will dance. It is not so hot under these trees."

"Yes, yes, Don Basilio, play the cornet à piston!"

"Bring Don Basilio the cornet on which Joaquin is learning to play."

"It isn't a very good one. Will you play it, Don Basilio?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Because I will not!"

"But why not?"

"Because I do not know how to play."

"Not know how to play! Did you ever know such a hypocrite?"

"I suppose he only wants to be coaxed a bit."

"Don't we all know that you have been the chief cornet player of your regiment, Don Basilio?"

"And that no one could equal you as a musician!"

"And that you were sent for to play at the Palace, in the days of Espartero!"

"And that you have a pension!"

"Please, Don Basilio. Do be kind to us!"

"Well, my children, what you say is true. I have played the cornet. I have been a—a specialist, as you say, but it is also true that two years ago I made a present of my cornet to a poor musician who had passed his examination as a cornet-player, but had no instrument of his own. Since then I have not blown a note."

"What a pity!"

"And you a second Rossini!"

"But anyhow, you will play for us this afternoon!"

"Out here in the fields it makes no difference if the cornet isn't very good."

"Grandfather, don't forget that it is my birthday!"

"Hurrah, hurrah! Here comes the cornet!"

"Now, what will he play?"

"A waltz?"

"No, a polka."

"Polka! What nonsense! Let us have a fandango."

"Oh, yes! A fandango, our own national dance."

"My dear children, I am very sorry, but it is quite impossible for me to play the cornet."

"But you are always so obliging, and now——"

"Do not be unkind to us."

"Your little grandson begs you to play."

"And your niece too."

"For Heaven's sake don't tease me. I have told you I cannot play."

"But why?"

"Because I have forgotten how to play, and what is more, I have sworn never to learn again."

"To whom did you swear?"

"To myself, to a dead man, and to my daughter, your poor mother."

The whole party grew serious on hearing this, and kept silence.

"Ah, if you only knew what it cost me to learn to play the cornet!" added the old man.

"Oh, tell us! It is a story, then?"

All the young people gathered round.

"A story indeed," said Don Basilio, "and a strange one. Listen, and then you can judge whether I can play the cornet or not."

He sat under a tree, and the interested group sat round him, while he related the story of how he learned to play the instrument for which he had been so celebrated.

Just in such a way did Byron's hero, Mazeppa, relate to Charles XII. one evening, under another tree, the terrible story of how he learned to ride.

Let us listen to Don Basilio.

II

"Just seventeen years ago the civil war broke out in Spain.

"Carlos and Isabel both claimed the crown, and the people of Spain, divided into two parties, shed their blood in a fratricidal struggle.

"I had a friend, named Ramón Gomez, a lieutenant of chasseurs in the same battalion in which I was, and he was the most charming man of my acquaintance. We had been brought up together,

we left school at the same time, we fought together from the beginning of the war, and both of us were ready to die for freedom. He was more eager for the freedom of our country than even I and all the rest of the army put together.

" One day our Colonel offended Ramón by some arbitrary order; one of those brutes of authority which sometimes interfere with the most promising careers. I do not know exactly how this came about, but the result was that the proud and freedom-loving lieutenant of chasseurs abandoned the ranks of his comrades, deserted even his bosom friend, went over to the enemy, and all that he might have the right to kill his Colonel in fair warfare! Ramón was not the man to stand insult or injustice from any one under the sun.

" Neither my threats nor my entreaties were of any use to make him change his mind. He had fully decided. He would exchange the Queen's uniform for that of the Carlists, the helmet for the rebel cap, in spite of his mortal hatred for the party who were disturbing our country—the faction fighters, as we called them.

" At that time we were in the Prince's district, three leagues distant from the enemy. Ramón had determined to desert that night. It was miserable weather, cold, wet, and dreary, and next day there was to be a battle.

" About midnight Ramón came to my quarters. I was asleep, but he called me softly.

" ' Basilio! '

" ' Who is it? '

" ' It is I. Farewell! '

" He caught hold of my hand.

" ' Listen,' he said. ' If there is a battle to-morrow, as we expect, and if we meet in it——'

" ' Well, of course we shall meet as friends.'

" ' No. We shall embrace first, and then we shall fight. I shall certainly die to-morrow, for I shall stop at nothing until I have killed the Colonel. As for you, Basilio, do not expose yourself to danger. Glory is nothing but smoke.'

" ' And what about life? '

" ' That's true,' exclaimed Ramón. ' You should be the Colonel yourself. Our pay is not smoke, however, at least until we have spent it. Well, everything is over with me now! '

" ' What gloomy ideas,' said I, but I was sad enough too. ' We will both survive to-morrow's battle.'

" ' Well, let us make an appointment to meet after it is over.'

" ' Where? '

" ' In the old hermitage of St. Nicholas, at one o'clock in the morning. If one of us does not come, it will be because he is dead. Do you agree? '

" ' Yes, of course I agree.'

" ' Well, good-bye, then.'

" ' Good-bye.'

" A hearty embrace, and we parted. Ramón disappeared in the surrounding darkness.

III

" As we expected, the Carlists attacked us next day. The battle lasted from three in the afternoon until night fell, and there was great slaughter on both sides. About five o'clock my battalion was engaged in severe fighting with a force of troops from Alava, commanded by Ramón.

My friend wore the rebel uniform and the white cap of the Carlists!

" I ordered my troops to fire on his men, and he gave a similar order to those under his command. We fought hand to hand, but at last my side conquered, and Ramón was obliged to retreat with the remnants of his force. Not, however, before he had killed his former Colonel with his own hand, shooting him down without remorse.

" At six o'clock the tide of battle turned against us. Part of my company was cut off, surrounded, and I and my men were taken prisoners, brought to the little town in the neighbourhood which had been occupied by the Carlists since the beginning of the campaign, and nothing seemed more certain than that we would all be shot at once! for no quarter was given in that war to prisoners by either side.

IV

" I heard one o'clock strike as I sat in my prison cell—the hour of my appointment with Ramón. I was shut up with my companions in the town prison.

" I asked one of my guards about Ramón.

" ' Oh, he is a brave fellow. He killed a colonel with his own hands. But we think he must have been killed, too, at the end of the battle.'

" ' Why do you think so? '

" ' Because he has not come back from the battlefield, and none of his men know what has become of him.'

" Ah, what I went through that night!

" One hope remained to me. Ramón might have gone to the hermitage of St. Nicholas, and thus not returned to the scene of the battle.

" ' How sad he will be,' I thought, ' if I do not go to meet him. He will think I am dead. And indeed I am not far from my end now. The Carlists always shoot their prisoners, just as we do.'

" At dawn a chaplain entered the prison.

" All my comrades were asleep.

" ' Are we to die? ' I asked on seeing the priest.

" ' Yes,' he replied in a sad and gentle tone.

" ' Now? '

" ' No, in three hours' time.'

" A minute later he awakened my comrades, and the prison resounded with cries, prayers, sobs, and curses.

V

" When a man is near death, he usually becomes possessed with one idea, which dominates him above all others, and of which he cannot get rid. This happened to me, like a nightmare, a feverish dream or madness. I could not turn my thoughts from Ramón. Living or dead, in the other world already or in the hermitage waiting for me, his image never left me, and I did not trouble about my own fate for fretting and chafing to know what had become of my friend.

" The Carlists took away my captain's uniform and put the clothes and cap of one of their own men on me, a worn-out suit too.

" I was marched to my death with my nineteen comrades in misfortune. There had been twenty-one of us, but one had been pardoned, because he was a musician. The Carlists were very short of musicians for their regimental bands, so they spared the lives of all musicians whom they captured."

" So that was how you were saved, Don Basilio," all the young people cried out in joy. " You say you cannot play, and yet you were saved because you were a musician! "

" No, my children," replied the old man. " I was not a musician.

" To go on with my story. The firing party arrived, and the rest of the regiment was drawn up in a hollow square. We were ranged in a row to await our death. I was the eleventh from the beginning of the row. That is, I was to be the eleventh to die. I thought of my wife and my daughter; you and your mother, my child! Then the shots began. My eyes were bandaged, so that I could not see who fell.

" I began to count the shots to see when my turn would come. I wished to be able to know when my last moment on earth was at hand. But my head was swimming; I grew confused, and I lost count!

" Those shots will ring for ever in my ears. I can hear them now; I can feel again the torture which the suspense inflicted on my brain. Each time I thought, ' My turn is surely next,' but another shot rang out and I was still alive.

" At last I had no longer any doubt. Something struck or seized me. I felt no pain, but confused murmurs filled my ears. I staggered and fell, and I remembered nothing more. I seemed to fall into a deep sleep, from which I only woke to dream, and my first dream was that I had been shot and killed.

VI

" Still in a dream I found myself on a couch in the prison. I could not see.

" I raised my hand to my eyes, thinking that they were still bandaged, but there was nothing there. Had I died, or was I blind?

" No. The fact was that the prison was perfectly dark.

" I heard a bell tolling. It was a church bell.

" ' It is nine o'clock,' I thought. ' But what is the day? '

" Something bent over me; a shadow still darker than the heavy air of the prison. It took the shape of a man.

" I asked, ' What has become of the other nineteen? '

" They have all been shot.'

" ' And I? Am I still alive, or is this death, too? '

" I groped towards the shadow and murmured the name which came first to my thoughts.

" Ramón? '

" ' What is it? ' asked the voice of the shadow, the voice of my friend.

" ' Ramón! ' I exclaimed, trembling. ' Am I in the other world? '

" ' No,' replied the voice.

" ' Ramón, are you still alive? '

" ' Well, yes, so far.'

" ' And I? '

" ' The same.'

" ' But where am I? Is this the monastery of St. Nicholas, the hermitage where we were to meet? Am I not a prisoner? Or did I dream everything? '

" ' No, Basilio, you have not dreamed anything. Listen.

VII

" ' As you know, yesterday I killed the Colonel in fair fight. I am avenged. I was mad with rage, and I went on killing my own former comrades until night fell and I could see no one else on the battlefield.

" ' When the moon rose, I thought of you. I directed my steps to the hermitage of St. Nicholas, intending to wait for you there. It was just ten o'clock. We had agreed to meet there at one, and the night before I had not closed my eyes. I slept heavily until the sound of a clock awoke me.

" ' It was one o'clock.

" ' I looked round and found I was alone. I thought you must be dead. But still I waited, full of anxiety and distress.

" ' Two, three, four o'clock. What a terrible night of waiting!

" ' You did not come before the dawn. No doubt you would never come; you were dead. I left the hermitage and went down to the town to where the Carlists were. The sun was rising when I got to their barracks. All thought that I had been killed the day before, so that they greeted me with joy, and the General heaped attentions on me. Among other news, I was told that twenty prisoners were about to be shot. A presentiment darkened my mind.

" ' " Is Basilio among them? " I wondered.

" ' I ran at once to the place of execution. The firing party had been drawn up, and I heard some shots. I tried to distinguish the faces of the prisoners, and at last I saw you through a mist of agitation and anxiety which nearly blinded me. There were still two others to be shot before your turn came. What was to be done?

" ' I dashed forward like a madman. Catching you in my arms, I called out frantically:

" ' " Not this one, General. You must not shoot this one! "

" ' The General, who was directing the firing party, and who recognised me from the evening before, asked in surprise:

" ' " And why not? Is he a musician? "

" ' A sudden inspiration came to me, the one hope which existed flashed on me like sunshine on a blind man. The opportunity must not be lost. I was dazzled by the idea, and I cried out at once:

" ' " Musician, General! Why, he is one of the best musicians in the whole royalist army. He is a great musician! "

" ' You had fallen at my feet in a swoon, and you still lay unconscious.

" ' " What instrument does he play? " asked the General.

" ' Another inspiration. I looked at the regimental band, and thought some instruments were not there.

" ' " The . . . the . . ." I ran my eyes over the band. " The cornet à piston, General."

" ' " We do want a cornet à piston, don't we? " asked the General, turning to the bandmaster.

" ' How impatiently I awaited the reply.

" ' " Yes, General, we want one badly," answered the bandmaster.

" ' " Take this man away, and shoot all the others," said the Carlist General, coolly lighting a cigarette.

" ' So then I had you carried back to the prison here.'

VIII

" As Ramón stopped speaking, I rose and embraced him, saying in a choked voice:

" ' You have saved my life.'

" ' I don't know about that,' replied Ramón.

" ' Why, what now? '

" ' Can you play the cornet? '

" ' No.'

" ' Well, then, not only have I not saved your life, but I have lost it and my own as well.'

" I shivered, seeing what he meant.

" ' Do you know anything of music? ' asked he, after a pause.

" ' Very little. You remember they taught us some at school.'

" ' That was very little indeed; we might say less than nothing. They will certainly shoot you, and they will shoot me, too, as a traitor, for deceiving them. Just think. In a fortnight's time they are going to have the regimental band complete, and you are to be a member of it. It is all settled.'

" ' A fortnight? '

" ' Yes, indeed. And as you will not be able to play the cornet, for the age of miracles is past, we shall both be shot for certain.'

" Then I sprang up.

" ' Shot! ' I exclaimed. ' Just wait. I don't want to be shot, and I will not let you be shot either, as you have saved my life. In a fortnight I will understand music, and I will know how to play the cornet.'

" Ramón laughed at my promise.

IX

" There is not much more to tell, my children.

" We found out a music master in a small town a little way off, and, under pretext that, as I had lost my instrument in the battle, I wished to practise on his cornet, I was allowed to go to him under the charge of my friend Ramón, who gave his word that I would not try to escape. Oh, that fortnight. Day and night I studied, and every hour of day was spent with that musician, learning his infernal cornet à piston. In a fortnight I had mastered it well enough to become a member of the band and practise with the others.

" I know you will ask me why I did not run away. I could not. I was a prisoner of war, and Ramón was responsible for me. He

might have escaped without me, but he would not go alone, and it was too risky for both of us.

" I could not speak, eat or even think. I played, played, until I really believe I went mad. I must have done so, for my one thought in this world was my music.

" I had made up my mind to learn and I did learn. Where there's a will there's a way.

" If I had been dumb and had wished to speak, I would have spoken; if I had been paralysed and had wished to walk, I would have walked; if I had been blind and had wished to see, I would have seen! So great was my will to save my friend's life and my own.

" I willed to do it and I did it. To will a thing is to have the strength to do it. Children, do not forget this; there is always a way if there is a will. My whole mind went into what I willed, and I succeeded.

" But indeed I went mad.

" I thought of nothing but music. My new cornet, which they gave me when I became a member of the band, was like a child, like a live creature to me. For three years it scarcely left my hands. My whole world was made up of the notes of the scale and their combinations.

" Do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si. That was my whole existence. I did nothing but play the cornet.

" Ramón and I escaped at last, and made our way to France. There I made our living by means of my cornet. The cornet was myself, my whole soul. When I played I seemed to be singing, to be expressing myself, my ideas, through the instrument. I grew so familiar with it that I could make it do anything—laugh, weep, sigh, sing, growl. I could make it imitate any bird, any animal. People came to hear us. We gave public performances, and even the greatest musicians came to hear me and my wonderful cornet.

" Two years passed in this way. And then I lost my friend. Ramón died, Ramón who had cared for me in our wanderings so that I might be free to devote myself to my music.

" As I looked at his corpse my madness fell away from me. I became like other men once more. But when I next took up my cornet I had forgotten how to play a single note!

" Now, will you ask me to play the cornet so that you may dance to it? "

PEDRO A. DE ALARCÓN

THE ACCOUNT-BOOK

GAFFER BUSCABEATAS was already beginning to stoop at the time when the events occurred which I am going to relate; for he was now sixty years, and had spent forty cultivating a garden bordering on the shore of La Costilla.

In the year in question he had cultivated in this garden some wonderful pumpkins, as large as the ornamental globes on the breast-work of some massive bridge, and these at the time of our story were beginning to turn yellow, inside and out, which is the same as saying that it was the middle of June. Old Buscabeatas knew by heart the particular form and the stage of maturity at which it had arrived of every one of these pumpkins, to each of which he had given a name, and especially of the forty largest and finest specimens, which were already crying out, "Cook me!" and he spent the days contemplating them affectionately, and saying in melancholy accents:

"Soon we shall have to part!"

At last, one evening, he made up his mind to the sacrifice, and marking out the best fruits of those beloved vines which had cost him so many anxieties, he pronounced the dreadful sentence:

"To-morrow," he said, "I shall cut from their stalks these forty pumpkins and take them to the market at Cadiz. Happy the man who shall eat of them!"

And he returned to his home with slow step and spent the night in such anguish as a father may be supposed to feel on the eve of his daughter's wedding-day.

"What a pity to have to part from my dear pumpkins!" he would sigh from time to time in his restless vigil. But presently he would reason with himself and end his reflections by saying, "And what else can I do but sell them? That is what I have raised them for. The least they will bring me is fifteen dollars!"

Judge, then, what was his consternation, what his rage and despair, on going into the garden on the following morning, to find that during the night he had been robbed of his forty pumpkins! Not to weary the reader, I will only say that his emotion, like that of Shakespeare's Jew, so admirably represented, it is said,

by the actor Kemble, reached the sublimity of tragedy as he frantically cried:

"Oh, if I could but find the thief! If I could but find the thief!"

Poor old Buscabeatas presently began to reflect upon the matter with calmness, and comprehended that his beloved treasures could not be in Rota, where it would be impossible to expose them for sale without risk of their being recognised, and where, besides, vegetables bring a very low price.

"I know as well as if I saw them that they are in Cadiz!" he ended. "The scoundrel! the villain! the thief must have stolen them between nine and ten o'clock last night, and got off with them at midnight on the freight-boat. I shall go to Cadiz this morning on the hour-boat, and it will surprise me greatly if I do not catch the thief there, and recover the children of my toil."

After he had thus spoken he remained for some twenty minutes longer on the scene of the catastrophe, to caress the mutilated vines, to calculate the number of pumpkins that were missing, or to formulate a declaration of the loss sustained, for a possible suit; then, at about eight o'clock, he bent his steps in the direction of the wharf.

The hour-boat was just going to sail. This was a modest coaster which leaves Cadiz every morning at nine o'clock precisely, carrying passengers, as the freight-boat leaves Cadiz every night at twelve, laden with fruits and vegetables.

The former is called the hour-boat because in that space of time, and occasionally even in forty minutes, if the wind is favourable, it makes the three leagues which separate the ancient village of the Duke of Arcos from the ancient city of Hercules.

It was, then, half-past ten in the morning, on the before-mentioned day, when old Buscabeatas passed before a vegetable-stand in the market of Cadiz, and said to the bored policeman who was accompanying him:

"Those are my squashes! arrest that man!" and he pointed to the vendor.

"Arrest me!" cried the vendor, astonished and enraged. "These squashes are mine; I bought them!"

"You will have to prove that before the judge!" answered old Buscabeatas.

"I say No!"

"I say Yes!"

"Thief!"

"Vagabond!"

"Speak more civilly, you ill-mannered fellows! Decent men ought not to treat one another in that way!" said the policeman

tranquilly, giving a blow with his closed fist to each of the disputants.

By this time a crowd had gathered, and there soon arrived also on the scene the inspector of public markets.

The policeman resigned his jurisdiction in the case to his Honour, and when this worthy official had learned all the circumstances relating to the affair, he said to the vendor majestically:

"From whom did you purchase those squashes?"

"From Gossip Fulano, a native of Rota," answered the person thus interrogated.

"It could be no one else!" cried old Buscabeatas. "He is just the one to do it! When his own garden, which is a very poor one, produces little, he takes to robbing the gardens of his neighbours!"

"But, admitting the supposition that forty pumpkins were stolen from you last night," said the inspector, turning to the old gardener and proceeding with his examination, "how do you know that these are precisely your pumpkins?"

"How?" replied old Buscabeatas. "Because I know them as well as you know your daughters, if you have any! Don't you see that they have grown up under my care? Look here: this one is called Roly-poly, this one Fat-cheeks, this one Big-belly, this one Ruddy-face, this Manuela, because it reminded me of my youngest daughter."

And the poor old man began to cry bitterly.

"That may be all very well," replied the inspector; "but it is not enough for the law that you should recognise your pumpkins. It is necessary also that the authorities be convinced of the pre-existence of the article in dispute, and that you identify it with incontrovertible proofs; gentlemen, there is no occasion for you to smile—I know the law!"

"You shall see, then, that I will very soon prove to the satisfaction of everybody present, without stirring from this spot, that these pumpkins have grown in my garden!" said old Buscabeatas, to the no little surprise of the spectators of this scene. And laying down on the ground a bundle which he had been carrying in his hand, he bent his knees until he sat upon his heels, and quietly began to untie the knotted corners of the handkerchief.

The curiosity of the inspector, the vendor, and the chorus was now at its height.

"What is he going to take out of that handkerchief?" they said to themselves.

At this moment a new spectator joined the crowd, curious to see what was going on, whom the vendor had no sooner perceived than he exclaimed:

"I am very glad that you have come, Gossip Fulano! This

man declares that the squashes which you sold me last night, and which are now here present, listening to what we are saying about them, were stolen. Answer, you! "

The newcomer turned as yellow as wax, and made a movement as if to escape, but the bystanders detained him by force, and the inspector himself ordered him to remain. As for Gaffer Buscabeatas, he had already confronted the supposed thief, saying to him:

" Now you are going to see something good."

Gossip Fulano, recovering his self-possession, answered:

" It is you who ought to see what you are talking about, for if you do not prove, as prove you cannot, your accusation, I shall have you put in prison for libel. These pumpkins were mine. I cultivated them, like all the others that I brought this year to Cadiz, in my garden, the Egido, and no one can prove to the contrary! "

" Now you shall see! " repeated old Buscabeatas, loosening the knots of the handkerchief and spreading out its contents on the ground.

And there were scattered over the floor a number of fragments of pumpkin stalks, still fresh and dripping sap, while the old gardener, seated on his heels and unable to control his laughter, addressed the following discourse to the inspector and the wondering bystanders.

" Gentlemen, have any of you ever paid taxes? If you have, you must have seen the big green box of the collector, from which he tears off your receipt, leaving the stub or end, so as to be able to prove afterward whether the receipt is genuine or not."

" The book you mean is called the account-book," said the inspector gravely.

" Well, that is what I have here—the account-book of my garden; that is to say, the stalks to which these pumpkins were attached before they were stolen from me. And in proof of what I say, look here! This stalk belongs to this pumpkin; no one can doubt it. This other—you can see for yourselves—belonged to this other. This is thicker—it must belong to this one. This to that one. This to that other."

And as he spoke he went fitting a stub or peduncle to the hole which had been made in each pumpkin as it was pulled from the stalk, and the spectators saw with surprise that the irregular and capricious shaped ends of the peduncles corresponded exactly with the whitish circles and the slight hollows presented by what we might call the cicatrices of the pumpkins.

Every one present, including the policeman, and even the inspector himself, then got down on their heels and began to help old Buscabeatas in his singular comprobation, crying out with childlike delight:

"He is right! he is right! There is not a doubt of it! Look! This belongs to this one. This to that one. That one there belongs to this. This belongs to that!" And the bursts of laughter of the grown people were mingled with the whistling of the boys, the abuse of the women, the tears of joy and triumph of the old gardener, and the pushes that the policeman gave to the convicted thief, as if they were impatient to carry him off to prison.

Needless to say that the policeman had that pleasure; that Gossip Fulano was immediately compelled to restore to the vendor the fifteen dollars he had received from him, that the vendor handed these over at once to Gaffer Buscabeatas, and that the latter departed for Rota, highly delighted, although he kept repeating all the way home:

"How handsome they looked in the market! I should have brought Manuela back with me to eat at supper to-night, and saved the seeds."

GUSTAVO ADOLFO BÉCQUER

1836–1870

MAESE PÉREZ, THE ORGANIST

I

" Do you see that man with the scarlet cloak, and the white plume in his hat, and the gold-embroidered vest? I mean the one just getting out of his litter and going to greet that lady—the one coming along after those four pages who are carrying torches? Well, that is the Marquis of Mascoso, lover of the widow, the Countess of Villapineda. They say that before he began paying court to her he had sought the hand of a very wealthy man's daughter, but the girl's father, who, they say, is a trifle close-fisted —but hush! Speaking of the devil—do you see that man closely wrapped in his cloak coming on foot under the arch of San Felipe? Well, he is the father in question. Everybody in Seville knows him on account of his immense fortune.

" Look—look at that group of stately men! They are the twenty-four knights. Aha! there's that Heming, too. They say that the gentlemen of the green cross have not challenged him yet, thanks to his influence with the great ones at Madrid. All he comes to church for is to hear the music.

" Alas! neighbour, that looks bad. I fear there's going to be a scuffle. I shall take refuge in the church, for, according to my guess, there will be more blows than *Paternosters*. Look, look! the Duke of Alcalá's people are coming round the corner of Saint Peter's Square, and I think I see the Duke of Medina Sidonia's men in Dueñas Alley. Didn't I tell you? There—there! The blows are beginning. Neighbour, neighbour, this way before they close the doors!

" But what's that? They've left off. What's that light? Torches! a litter! It's the bishop himself! God preserve him in his office as many centuries as I desire to live myself! If it were not for him, half Seville would have been burned up by this time with these quarrels of the dukes. Look at them, look at them, the hypocrites, how they both press forward to kiss the bishop's ring!

" But come, neighbour—come into the church before it is packed full. Some nights like this it is so crowded that you could not get in if you were no larger than a grain of wheat. The nuns have a prize in their organist. Other sisterhoods have made Maese Pérez magnificent offers; nothing strange about that, though, for the very archbishop has offered him mountains of gold if he would go to the cathedral. But he would not listen to them. He would sooner die than give up his beloved organ. You don't know Maese Pérez? Oh, I forgot you had just come to the neighbourhood. Well, he is a holy man; poor, to be sure, but as charitable as any man that ever lived. With no relative but a daughter, and no friend but his organ, he spends all his time in caring for the one and repairing the other. The organ is an old affair, you must know; but that makes no difference to him. He handles it so that its tone is a wonder. How he does know it! and all by touch, too, for did I tell you that the poor man was born blind?

" Humble, too, as the very stones. He always says that he is only a poor convent organist, when the fact is he could give lessons in *sol-fa* to the very chapel master of the primate. You see, he began before he had teeth. His father had the same position before him, and as the boy showed such talent, it was very natural that he should succeed his father when the latter died. And what a touch he has, God bless him! He always plays well, always; but on a night like this he is wonderful. He has the greatest devotion to this Christmas Eve Mass, and when the host is elevated, precisely at twelve o'clock, which is the time that Our Lord came into the world, his organ sounds like the voices of angels.

" But why need I try to tell you about what you are going to hear to-night? It is enough for you to see that all the elegance of Seville, the very archbishop included, comes to a humble convent to listen to him. And it is not only the learned people who can understand his skill that come; the common people, too, swarm to the church, and are still as the dead when Maese Pérez puts his hand to the organ. And when the host is elevated—when the host is elevated, then you can't hear a fly. Great tears fall from every eye, and when the music is over a long-drawn sigh is heard, showing how the people have been holding their breath all through.

" But come, come, the bells have stopped ringing, and the Mass is going to begin. Hurry in. This is Christmas Eve for everybody, but for no one is it a greater occasion than for us."

So saying, the good woman who had been acting as *cicerone* for her neighbour pressed through the portico of the Convent of Santa Inés, and elbowing this one and pushing the other, succeeded in getting inside the church, forcing her way through the multitude that was crowding about the door.

II

The church was profusely lighted. The flood of light which fell from the altars glanced from the rich jewels of the great ladies, who, kneeling upon velvet cushions placed before them by pages, and taking their prayer-books from the hands of female attendants, formed a brilliant circle around the chancel lattice. Standing next that lattice, wrapped in their richly coloured and embroidered cloaks, letting their green and red orders be seen with studied carelessness, holding in one hand their hats, the plumes sweeping the floor, and letting the other rest upon the polished hilts of rapiers or the jewelled handles of daggers, the twenty-four knights, and a large part of the highest nobility of Seville, seemed to be forming a wall for the purpose of keeping their wives and daughters from contact with the populace. The latter, swaying back and forth at the rear of the nave, with a noise like that of a rising surf, broke out into joyous acclamations as the archbishop was seen to come in. That dignitary seated himself near the high altar under a scarlet canopy, surrounded by his attendants, and three times blessed the people.

It was time for the Mass to begin.

Nevertheless, several minutes passed before the celebrant appeared. The multitude commenced to murmur impatiently; the knights exchanged words with each other in a low tone; and the archbishop sent one of his attendants to the sacristan to inquire why the service did not begin.

"Maese Pérez has fallen sick, very sick, and it will be impossible for him to come to the midnight Mass."

This was the word brought back by the attendant.

The news ran instantly through the crowd. The disturbance caused by it was so great that the chief judge rose to his feet, and the officers came into the church, to enforce silence.

Just then a man of unpleasant face, thin, bony, and cross-eyed, too, pushed up to the place where the archbishop was sitting.

"Maese Pérez is sick," he said; "the service cannot begin. If you see fit, I will play the organ in his absence. Maese Pérez is not the best organist in the world, nor need this instrument be left unused after his death for lack of any one able to play it."

The archbishop nodded his head in assent, although some of the faithful, who had already recognised in that strange person an envious rival of the organist of Santa Inés, were breaking out in cries of displeasure. Suddenly a surprising noise was heard in the portico.

"Maese Pérez is here! Maese Pérez is here!"

At this shout, coming from those jammed in by the door, every one looked around.

Maese Pérez, pale and feeble, was, in fact, entering the church, brought in a chair which all were quarrelling for the honour of carrying upon their shoulders.

The commands of the physicians, the tears of his daughter—nothing had been able to keep him in bed.

"No," he had said; "this is the last one, I know it. I know it, and I do not want to die without visiting my organ again, this night above all, this Christmas Eve. Come, I desire it, I order it; come, to the church!"

His desire had been gratified. The people carried him in their arms to the organ-loft. The Mass began.

Twelve struck on the cathedral clock.

The introit came, then the Gospel, then the offertory, and the moment arrived when the priest, after consecrating the sacred wafer, took it in his hands and began to elevate it. A cloud of incense filled the church in bluish undulations. The little bells rang out in vibrating peals, and Maese Pérez placed his aged fingers upon the organ keys.

The multitudinous voices of the metal tubes gave forth a prolonged and majestic chord, which died away little by little, as if a gentle breeze had borne away its last echoes.

To this opening burst, which seemed like a voice lifted up to heaven from earth, responded a sweet and distant note, which went on swelling and swelling in volume until it became a torrent of overpowering harmony. It was the voice of the angels, traversing space, and reaching the world.

Then distant hymns began to be heard, intoned by the hierarchies of seraphim; a thousand hymns at once, mingling to form a single one, though this one was only an accompaniment to a strange melody which seemed to float above that ocean of mysterious echoes, as a strip of fog above the waves of the sea.

One song after another died away. The movement grew simpler. Now only two voices were heard, whose echoes blended. Then but one remained, and alone sustained a note as brilliant as a thread of light. The priest bowed his face, and above his grey head appeared the host. At that moment the note which Maese Pérez was holding began to swell and swell, and an explosion of unspeakable joy filled the church.

From each of the notes forming that magnificent chord a theme was developed; and some near, others far away, these brilliant, those muffled, one would have said that the waters and the birds, the breezes and the forests, men and angels, earth and heaven, were singing, each in its own language, a hymn in praise of the Saviour's birth.

The people listened, amazed and breathless. The officiating priest felt his hands trembling; for it seemed as if he had seen the

heavens opened and the host transfigured.

The organ kept on, but its voice sank away gradually, like a tone going from echo to echo, and dying as it goes. Suddenly a cry was heard in the organ-loft—a piercing, shrill cry, the cry of a woman.

The organ gave a strange, discordant sound, like a sob, and then was silent.

The multitude flocked to the stairs leading up to the organ-loft, towards which the anxious gaze of the faithful was turned.

"What has happened? What is the matter?" one asked the other, and no one knew what to reply. The confusion increased. The excitement threatened to disturb the good order and decorum fitting within a church.

"What was that?" asked the great ladies of the chief judge. He had been one of the first to ascend to the organ-loft. Now pale and displaying signs of deep grief, he was going to the archbishop, who was anxious, like everybody else, to know the cause of the disturbance.

"What's the matter?"

"Maese Pérez has just expired."

In fact, when the first of the faithful rushed up the stairway, and reached the organ-loft, they saw the poor organist fallen face down upon the keys of his old instrument, which was still vibrating, while his daughter, kneeling at his feet, was vainly calling to him with tears and sobs.

III

"Good-evening, my dear Donna Baltasara. Are you also going to-night to the Christmas Eve Mass? For my part, I was intending to go to the parish church to hear it, but what has happened—where is Vicente going, do you ask? Why, where the crowd goes. And I must say, to tell the truth, that ever since Maese Pérez died, it seems as if a marble slab was on my heart whenever I go to Santa Inés. Poor dear man! He was a saint! I know one thing—I keep a piece of his cloak as a relic, and he deserves it. I solemnly believe that if the archbishop would stir in the matter our grandchildren would see his image among the saints on the altars. But, of course, he won't do that. The dead and absent have no friends, as they say. It's all the latest thing, nowadays; you understand me. What? You do not know what has happened? Well, it's true you are not exactly in our situation. From our house to the church, and from the church to our house—a word here and another one there—on the wing—without any curiosity whatever—I easily find out all the news.

"Well, then, it's a settled thing that the organist of San Roman—that squint-eye, who is always slandering other organists—that

great blunderer, who seems more like a butcher than a master of *sol-fa*—is going to play this Christmas Eve in Maese Pérez's old place. Of course, you know, for everybody knows it, and it is a public matter in all Seville, that no one dared to try it. His daughter would not, though she is a professor of music herself. After her father's death she went into the convent as a novice. Her unwillingness to play was the most natural thing in the world; accustomed as she was to those marvellous performances, any other playing must have appeared bad to her, not to speak of her desire to avoid comparisons. But when the sisterhood had already decided that in honour of the dead organist, and as a token of respect to his memory, the organ should not be played to-night, here comes this fellow along and says that he is ready to play it.

" Ignorance is the boldest of all things. It is true, the fault is not his so much as theirs who have consented to this profanation, but that is the way of the world. But, I say, there's no small bit of people coming. Any one would say that nothing had changed since last year. The same distinguished persons, the same elegant costumes, the crowding at the door, the same excitement in the portico, the same throng in the church. Alas! if the dead man were to rise, he would feel like dying again to hear his organ played by inferior hands. The fact is, if what the people of the neighbourhood tell me is true, they are getting a fine reception ready for the intruder. When the time comes for him to touch the keys there is going to break out a racket made by timbrels, drums, and horse-fiddles, so that you can't hear anything else. But hush! there's the hero of the occasion going into the church. Goodness! what gaudy clothes, what a neckcloth, what a high and mighty air! Come, hurry up, the archbishop came only a moment ago, and the Mass is going to begin. Come on; I guess this night will give us something to talk about for many a day! "

Saying this, the worthy woman, whom the reader recognises by her abrupt talkativeness, went into the Church of Santa Inés, opening for herself a path, in her usual way, by shoving and elbowing through the crowd.

The service had already begun. The church was as brilliant as the year before.

The new organist, after passing between the rows of the faithful in the nave, and going to kiss the archbishop's ring, had gone up to the organ-loft, where he was trying one stop of the organ after another, with an affected and ridiculous gravity.

A low, confused noise was heard coming from the common people clustered at the rear of the church, a sure augury of the coming storm, which would not be long in breaking.

" He is a mere clown," said some, " who does not know how to do anything, not even look straight."

" He is an ignoramus," said others, " who, after having made a perfect rattle out of the organ in his own church, comes here to profane Maese Pérez's."

And while one was taking off his cloak so as to be ready to beat his drum to good advantage, and another was testing his timbrel, and all were more and more buzzing out in talk, only here and there could one be found to defend even feebly that curious person, whose proud and pedantic bearing so strongly contrasted with the modest appearance and kind affability of Maese Pérez.

At last the looked-for moment arrived, when the priest, after bowing low and murmuring the sacred words, took the host in his hands. The bells gave forth a peal, like a rain of crystal notes; the transparent waves of incense rose, and the organ sounded.

But its first chord was drowned by a horrible clamour which filled the whole church. Bagpipes, horns, timbrels, drums, every instrument known to the populace, lifted up their discordant voices all at once.

The confusion and clangour lasted but a few seconds. As the noises began, so they ended, all together.

The second chord, full, bold, magnificent, sustained itself, pouring from the organ's metal tubes like a cascade of inexhaustible and sonorous harmony.

Celestial songs like those that caress the ear in moments of ecstasy; songs which the soul perceives, but which the lip cannot repeat; single notes of a distant melody, which sound at intervals, borne on the breeze; the rustle of leaves kissing each other on the trees with a murmur like rain; trills of larks which rise with quivering songs from among the flowers like a flight of arrows to the sky; nameless sounds, overwhelming as the roar of a tempest; fluttering hymns, which seemed to be mounting to the throne of the Lord like a mixture of light and sound—all were expressed by the organ's hundred voices, with more vigour, more subtle poetry, more weird colouring, than had ever been known before.

When the organist came down from the loft the crowd which pressed up to the stairway was so great, and their eagerness to see and greet him so intense, that the chief judge, fearing, and not without reason, that he would be suffocated among them all, ordered some of the officers to open a path for the organist with their staves of office, so that he could reach the high altar, where the prelate was waiting for him.

" You perceive," said the archbishop, " that I have come all the way from my palace to hear you. Now, are you going to be as cruel as Maese Pérez? He would never save me the journey, by going to play the Christmas Eve Mass in the cathedral."

" Next year," replied the organist, " I promise to give you the

pleasure; since, for all the gold in the world, I would never play this organ again."

"But why not?" interrupted the prelate.

"Because," returned the organist, endeavouring to repress the agitation which revealed itself in the pallor of his face—"because it is so old and poor; one cannot express oneself on it satisfactorily."

The archbishop withdrew, followed by his attendants. One after another the litters of the great folk disappeared in the windings of the neighbouring streets. The group in the portico scattered. The sexton was locking up the doors, when two women were perceived, who had stopped to cross themselves and mutter a prayer, and who were now going on their way into Dueñas Alley.

"What would you have, my dear Donna Baltasara?" one was saying. "That's the way I am. Every crazy person with his whim. The barefooted Capuchins might assure me that it was so, and I would not believe it. That man never played what we have heard. Why, I have heard him a thousand times in San Bartolomé, his parish church; the priest had to send him away, he was so poor a player. You felt like plugging your ears with cotton. Why, all you need is to look at his face, and that is the mirror of the soul, they say. I remember, as if I was seeing him now, poor man—I remember Maese Pérez's face, nights like this, when he came down from the organ-loft, after having entranced the audience with his splendours. What a gracious smile! What a happy glow on his face! Old as he was, he seemed like an angel. But this creature came plunging down as if a dog were barking at him on the landing, and all the colour of a dead man, while his—come, dear Donna Baltasara, believe me, and believe what I say: there is some great mystery about this."

Thus conversing, the two women turned the corner of the alley and disappeared. There is no need of saying who one of them was.

IV

Another year had gone by. The Abbess of the Convent of Santa Inés and Maese Pérez's daughter were talking in a low voice, half hidden in the shadows of the church choir. The penetrating voice of the bell was summoning the faithful. A very few people were passing through the portico, silent and deserted, this year, and after taking holy water at the door, were choosing seats in a corner of the nave, where a handful of residents of the neighbourhood were quietly waiting for the Christmas Eve Mass to begin.

"There, you see," the Mother Superior was saying, "your fear is entirely childish; there is no one in the church. All Seville is

trooping to the cathedral to-night. Play the organ, and do it without any distrust whatever. We are only a sisterhood here. But why don't you speak? What has happened? What is the matter with you? "

" I am afraid," replied the girl, in a tone of the deepest agitation.

" Afraid! Of what? "

" I do not know—something supernatural. Listen to what happened last night. I had heard you say that you were anxious for me to play the organ for the Mass. I was proud of the honour, and I thought I would arrange the stops and get the organ in good tune so as to give you a surprise to-day. Alone I went into the choir and opened the door leading to the organ-loft. The cathedral clock was striking just then, I do not know what hour; but the strokes of the bell were very mournful, and they were very numerous—going on sounding for a century, as it seemed to me, while I stood as if nailed to the threshold.

" The church was empty and dark. Far away there gleamed a feeble light, like a faint star in the sky; it was the lamp burning on the high altar. By its flickering light, which only helped to make the deep horror of the shadows the more intense, I saw—I saw—mother, do not disbelieve it—a man. In perfect silence, and with his back turned towards me, he was running over the organ-keys with one hand while managing the stops with the other. And the organ sounded, but in an indescribable manner. It seemed as if each note were a sob smothered in the metal tube, which vibrated under the pressure of the air compressed within it, and gave forth a low, almost imperceptible tone, yet exact and true.

" The cathedral clock kept on striking, and that man kept on running over the keys. I could hear his very breathing.

" Fright had frozen the blood in my veins. My body was as cold as ice, except my head, and that was burning. I tried to cry out, but I could not. That man turned his face and looked at me—no, he did not look at me, for he was blind. It was my father! "

" Nonsense, sister! Banish these fancies with which the adversary endeavours to overturn weak imaginations. Address a *Paternoster* and an *Ave Maria* to the archangel, Saint Michael, the captain of the celestial hosts, that he may aid you in opposing evil spirits. Wear on your neck a scapulary which has been pressed to the relics of Saint Pacomio, the counsellor against temptations, and go, go quickly, and sit at the organ. The Mass is going to begin, and the faithful are growing impatient. Your father is in heaven, and thence, instead of giving you a fright, will descend to inspire his daughter in the solemn service."

The prioress went to occupy her seat in the choir in the midst of the sisterhood. Maese Pérez's daughter opened the door of the

organ-loft with trembling hand, sat down at the organ, and the Mass began.

The Mass began, and went on without anything unusual happening until the time of consecration came. Then the organ sounded. At the same time came a scream from Maese Pérez's daughter.

The Mother Superior, the nuns, and some of the faithful rushed up to the organ-loft.

"Look at him!—look at him!" cried the girl, fixing her eyes, starting from their sockets, upon the seat, from which she had risen in terror. She was clinging with convulsed hands to the railing of the organ-loft.

Everybody looked intently at the spot to which she directed her gaze. No one was at the organ, yet it went on sounding—sounding like the songs of the archangels in their bursts of mystic ecstasy.

"Didn't I tell you a thousand times, if I did once, dear Donna Baltasara—didn't I tell you? There is some great mystery about this. What! didn't you go last night to the Christmas Eve Mass? Well, you must know, anyhow, what happened. Nothing else is talked about in the whole city. The archbishop is furious, and no wonder. Not to have gone to Santa Inés, not to have been present at the miracle—and all to hear a wretched clatter! That's all the inspired organist of San Bartolomé made in the cathedral, so persons who heard him tell me. Yes, I said so all the time. The squint-eye never could have played that. It was all a lie. There is some great mystery here. What do I think it was? Why, it was the soul of Maese Pérez."

EUSEBIO BLASCO

1844–1903

MODERN LIFE

I

WELL, sir, this is about a father who had four sons. The eldest was twenty-four, the second twenty-three, the third twenty-two, and the fourth twenty-one. And the father was a widower, a banker, and very, very rich.

As the four sons had already taken their B.A. (which is of no practical use in modern life), he called them together one day and said to them:

"Now, my sons, you must choose your careers. What do you want to be?"

The eldest, who was called Manuel, replied:

"Father, I want to be a lawyer."

"Right," said the father, "a lawyer you shall be."

The second, who was called Antonio, replied:

"I want to be a doctor."

"You shall be a doctor, I have no objection."

The third, who was called José, replied:

"I, father, want to be a merchant like yourself, and a banker, and make money quickly."

"I shall help you to be what you want."

The youngest brother, after a long pause, said meekly:

"Papa, I want to be a robber."

Then there was a scene! The father jumped in his chair, and nearly struck the ceiling with his head. His brothers called him a vagabond, an idler, a loafer, a cheat, a bad son, a bad brother, and a future bad citizen. Even the servants and neighbours were scandalised on hearing of his perverse instincts. However, the boy kept on repeating:

"I want to be a robber, and a robber I shall be, and if you don't let me, I'll leave home!"

And from home his father threw him, and cursed him, and indeed it was a real family drama.

And that night, Dimas, for such was the name of this rich man's son, packed his bag and said to the oldest servant in the house,

who knew nothing of the matter and thought the boy was going to see one of the many relatives his master had in Castile or in Andalusia:

"Ramon, I don't want to trouble father and am in a difficulty: will you lend me one thousand pesetas and I will pay you back next week?"

Ramon, who had saved up some money, counted out two hundred dollars and handed them to him.

"Good," said Dimas, as he left without intending to return, "a debt is a debt; so now I have something to start with."

II

And twenty-five years went by.

Twenty-five years! It is a long time; and nothing was heard of that wicked young man. . . .

And the father was now over seventy, and was getting very old and very feeble, for during that time he had lost his fortune in unlucky speculations. . . . The bank of the Upper Lands failed, and with it went his money and his credit; two or three friends disappeared, owing him thousands of dollars. . . . And he who once had carriages and houses of his own, and shooting-boxes and country villas, was now living, after having paid his debts little by little like a just man, in a small room in the Costanilla de los Desamparados at twelve dollars a month. Poor man!

His sons had no luck either.

Manuel, the lawyer, only received two briefs in the twenty-five years; he lost both cases, although they said his clients were in the right; but the other side had *influence*; the lawyer for the bad people knew ministers, deputies, senators; he won both cases "like winking." And Manuel, in despair, had to be satisfied with employment in a private firm, at two thousand pesetas a year, less what was needed to keep his wife and five children. The only thing he received for his unfortunate campaigns at the bar was the Cross of Isabel the Catholic, given him by a deputy he knew; but he never wore it, as it is not the custom.

Antonio, the doctor, did not do any better. Soon after he started practising, two or three of his patients died, because they had to die, because it was so ordained, because there is sickness that nobody can cure. What could have given greater pleasure to all the doctors who knew and envied him? They began to say that he was a *murderer*, that he knew nothing of medicine, that his father was a swindler, a crafty merchant, and that people who were ill ought not to send for the son of such a father.

Thanks to a friend of his childhood, a doctor like himself, and very ignorant, but who had money and kept a luxurious consulting-

room full of stupendous appliances, and advertised in the newspapers a radical cure, at twenty dollars a visit, of an endless number of things; thanks to this friend, I repeat, he obtained a position as doctor at a spa, but one that was quite unknown and not sufficiently advertised.

The first season he had no more than fourteen patients. Two of them were gamblers from Madrid suffering from stomach trouble, but instead of following the cure at the Hydro they passed the night drinking and playing the guitar.

One of them, by mixing the cure with hard drinking, contracted a kind of deadly cholera and died in three days; his brother, who did not want to pay for the baths, began to say that the waters were a fraud and that the doctor did not know what he was doing, and published statements in the papers and raised the very devil; our Don Antonio was dismissed, and he returned to Madrid dishonoured, out of employment and without a peseta.

He could not get a patient, no matter how hard he tried. He established himself in two or three towns, one after the other, in Navarra, Aragon, and Rioja. The country people did not pay him, and when any one died they started throwing stones at the doctor. He returned to Madrid disconsolate, and lived on the little he received from an apothecary, of the kind who pose as doctors and sell drugs that cure everything.

José, the one that wanted to be a merchant like his father, did nothing but lose money, time, and health for twenty-five years. He opened a shop and sold very pretty things—ties, mufflers, scents, studs, bracelets, pocket-books, hand-bags, sticks, umbrellas, shirts, watches, statuettes, knick-knacks, objects of art, novelties. . . . However, owing to commercial treaties, customs duties, rich clients who pay when they like, or do not pay at all, wars, bad times, extended payments, drafts that must be paid at once, protests, stocks, the devil's interference . . . crash! one day he went bankrupt. Everybody exclaimed:

"Of course! Like father, like son! What else could you expect!" The tradespeople rejoiced, the debtors were left in peace, and our Don José with his wife and children were in the street, and he had to end by being the manager of a weekly paper at a salary of six reales a day, not always paid.

The three brothers used to go to sit with their poor father who was ill, with only one servant and no doctor or medicines, and attended by his son Antonio, who prescribed things that were very dear. And in that modest room on the third floor of the Costanilla they often said:

"What could have happened to Dimas?"

"He must be in prison," said the father.

"He must be dead," said Manuel.

" Or he has been killed."

" Heaven only knows! "

" Fancy not writing one letter in twenty-five years! "

" What a bad son! "

" What a wretch! "

" What a bad brother! "

" Pray for him, my sons," said the father. " May God have compassion on the unhappy fellow! "

III

And one afternoon (it was Sunday and all the family were gathered together) the servant entered with a card, and said:

" Sir, a groom has brought this, and a carriage is waiting at the door! "

Manuel seized the card and read:

" The Marquis of Sahagun."

Tremendous excitement. A marquis! They all began to set the chairs in their places, to arrange the bed of the invalid, to put their ties straight, to hide the cards the three brothers had been playing with near the bedside of their father.

A marquis on a third floor! Whoever can he be? " Marquis of Sahagun " . . . said the old man. " Sahagun is my native town, in the province of Leon, and there is no such title there."

" Here is the gentleman," said the servant.

And there walked into the room a man of about forty-five or forty-six, very well dressed, with the red ribbon of some order in his buttonhole, and perfumed with a most expensive scent.

With one voice they all exclaimed:

" Dimas! "

It was he; in spite of his fair beard and his hair flecked with grey, they all recognised him easily. . . . And Dimas approached the bed, knelt down and said:

" Father, the Prodigal Son returned poor and in rags to his paternal house. That was in other days. I return a millionaire and powerful. Will you forgive me? "

There is an atmosphere about wealth and a wealthy man that always seduces and hypnotises fools. All the family saw in an instant that the return of Dimas boded good for them all. Twenty-five years of terrible maledictions and accusations were forgotten in an instant.

" My son! " exclaimed the father.

" Welcome to you! "

Manuel, Antonio, and José hugged and kissed him. Dimas in that room was something like a god.

What rejoicings, what questions, what a happy moment, what merriment!

And after the natural display of affection, his father said to him:

"Tell us, my son, tell us how you have attained such a high position."

Dimas moved towards the door; he locked it, and when they were alone, *en famille,* said before starting his narrative:

"Robbery, father!"

IV

The old man sat up in bed, terrified.

"No, don't be alarmed, *I have done nothing bad,* as they say. I return loaded with honours and millions; I command respect; I have led what they call a modern life.

"You will see:

"With the thousand pesetas I got out of Ramon . . . by the way, what has happened to Ramon?"

"He is very old now, and as an old soldier, we got him into the Invalides."

"This very afternoon I shall hand him one or two thousand dollars."

The figure fell like dew on the family.

"And for you, Manuel, I have set aside twenty thousand; for you, Antonio and José, a like amount. And for you, father, I bought a house yesterday in the Castellana, where we will all live together; you shall reign like a king."

They did not hear him now, they gazed at him as at a supernatural being!

"Well, with that thousand pesetas and another thousand from a friend, I sailed for the United States, a country with money and no morals. Until I could start business (what is nowadays called business and consists in taking other people's money) I found work in the house of a big shipowner, a wealthy man, and in six months I stole his wife."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the father.

"An irresistible folly, father! What the press of both hemispheres call a love drama! Everybody was on my side. She was young and full of life; her husband was old and ill, and treated her very badly. The papers published my photograph, and one of her, and one of the old man shooting himself. I was the hero of the country and went off to California with the object of my love. She brought me half a million dollars, and, as the man with the most money is the most esteemed there, I launched one of those businesses that everybody takes to. A gold mine that had no gold and never existed."

"But that was cheating!"

" But that is done every day, and the public, who are fools all the world over, subscribe the money immediately the shares are put on the market. Afterwards comes the failure. . . . And therefore I put a nobody at the head, to take the responsibility; I only appeared as a salaried manager. When the crash came, the other fellow was arrested and I cried, thief! Ah, you laugh, Manuel, eh? As a lawyer, you must have seen a lot of that, no? In fact, for a fee of ten thousand dollars you would have defended me!

" With the money I made out of that *speculation* . . . (nowadays, father, we call such things speculations, although it used to be otherwise) I went to Paris a wealthy man, settled down in great style and became a French citizen."

" French! " shouted his father, sitting up in bed, " my son a Frenchman! Never! impossible! "

" But, papa, don't you know in Spain we have the cleverest and most convenient law in the world? It is the only one that provides for the possibility of repentance and patriotism. According to Article twenty-one of the Civil Code, the Spaniard who loses his nationality by becoming naturalised in a foreign country may recover it by declaring that such is his wish before the Civil Registrar of the district in which he elects domicile. I have done so, and am as much a Spaniard as before, but have meanwhile made my fortune with the French."

" Smart! " said Manuel.

" Marvellous! " said the others.

" Once in Paris, a city enslaved to money and to those who possess it, I started an endless number of companies, all bad for other people and good for me. The French are like children; they let themselves be gulled with incredible ease. Remember what happened about Panama, about the Compagnie des Métaux, about the Transvaal Gold Mines, which are veritable sparrows' nets. . . . And as money and honours are essential to influence in Paris, and as there is a mania for nobility in that republican country, the first year I was there I went to Rome and bought a title. As Marquis de Sahagun and by lavish dinners, which is the modern system of making friends and admirers, I at once got possession of the market. An inventor without a peseta, like all inventors, described his invention to me. I stole his idea and made a fortune out of it."

" For God's sake, child! "

" But don't you know that no one who makes, invents, or creates a thing ever gets the benefit of it? The author is exploited by the publisher, the actor by the impresario, the inventor by the capitalist . . . capital! I am Capital, and all the world bows down before me! All the women worshipped me; I let my wife run away

with a poor fellow who fell in love with her; I conquered the most obstinate; the millions streamed in like water. . . . Decorations, crosses, honours, I have received them from all the countries in the world. . . . Besides, there are agencies that sell them! In a word: here I am, forty-six years of age, called 'the wealthy banker,' the 'great financier,' the 'philanthropist,' because I give thousands of francs to the poor, and now I am going to found a hospital and school and anything else they want here. . . . Well, father! To-morrow we move into the mansion; all the lower floor for you, the first for these fellows and their families; each shall have thirty or forty thousand dollars at the Bank, and I am going to set to work to become a deputy, a senator, a minister. . . . I shall make the laws! "

And they ended by laughing uproariously, and they were so intoxicated by the gold that fell on them as from the sky, that the father, half paralysed, jumped out of bed, and Manuel ran to tell them at home, and Antonio sang, and José began to think of the great stores he would erect in the very centre of Madrid, and Dimas laughed with delight at seeing them happy, and on leaving he said to a poor man who held open the carriage door:

"Get to work! Get to work! I have worked since I was a boy."

And all the family said: "What a very smart fellow. He always showed great talent! "

Great talent!!!

EUSEBIO BLASCO

THE RUSTIC COBBLER

WHAT I am going to tell you was told me by Don José Echegaray in four words.

It is a tale of melancholy philosophy and can be applied to many circumstances in life; for all of us in this lower world have formed illusions about certain things, and the reality has usually left us as badly off as Don Quijote.

The tale, or incident, which Don José related in friendly conversation at the Ateneo was applied by him to his one year's presidency of that stormy house, and I in turn applied it, after hearing it, to my unfortunate election as deputy, which left me with no desire to attempt another.

The interested reader can also apply it to many circumstances of his life.

The story is this:

I

There was once a cobbler who lived shut up in his private boot-shop, that is, an attic, in an Andalusian town, seeing, while he worked, the sun through the only window by which light came to the unhappy master of shoemaking.

This happened, as I said, in a city of the south, and the sun that bathes the fertile region where the incident occurred only reached the poor cobbler in a single ray for a few hours.

Through the bars of his small window he saw the blue sky limpid and clear, and as he nailed or stretched his leather, the poor man sighed with a certain anticipated home-sickness for some country as yet unknown to him.

"What a lovely day for a walk!" he would often exclaim to himself.

And when some customer brought him a filthy pair of boots belonging to the coachman opposite or to the carrier at the corner, the patcher would ask him:

"Is it fine outside?"

"A splendid day; there has never been a finer April. Neither hot nor cold, and a gorgeous sun."

The man sighed with more pain than ever, seized the boots and threw them savagely into a corner, saying:

"What luck you people have! Come back on Saturday for the boots. The repairs will cost six reales."

He tried to console himself by singing. And he repeated till nightfall:

"He who would but cannot
His liberty enjoy,
Need have no fear of dying
For he's already dead!"

And longing looks at the heavens, and more sighs, until sunset. The unhappy man was almost glad to see darkness set in. His sad condition and hard lot prevented him from taking the air until the evening.

One day a customer who lived in the same house came into his attic with a pair of country boots for him to repair. And as the cobbler with rustic ideas lamented that he could never see the country he so longed for, the other said to him:

"You are right, Uncle Gaspar: and therefore I say that the happiest people in the world are the donkey-drivers."

"The donkey-drivers, really?"

"Rather! they come and go, always enjoying the pure air, smelling the thyme and rosemary, kings of the world; yes, it is the finest work there is!"

Uncle Gaspar, when the customer had departed, was thoughtful, very thoughtful.

That night he did not sleep, but by dawn his mind was made up.

"To-morrow I will tell my nephew to look after the shop, and with the fifty dollars I have saved I shall buy a donkey and become a driver."

And so he did, and in eight days he was a *cosario,* as they call the carriers in the south.

"What a lovely day! What healthy air! Now I'm living, and not wasting the prime of my life in that hole under the roof! Gee-up, you beauty!" and Uncle Gaspar, on his first journey, sang as he picked the broom flowers along the roadside.

There was not a soul within a mile; Uncle Gaspar was, as he had so often wished, in sole possession of the country!

Suddenly, on rounding some prickly-pears to take a path to the right, three men fell on him, shouting:

"Halt there!"

One seized the donkey and mounted it, and started off hurriedly down the road; the other held Uncle Gaspar, whilst the third took what he had on him—money, clothes . . . everything! They left him naked, and there and then, so that he would not run after them, they gave him about fifty strokes with an ash stick, till his

ribs were black and blue, and his shouts must have been heard in the capital; but no one heard them.

In broad daylight!

At three in the afternoon in April, an attack so fierce and so unexpected!

Uncle Gaspar emitted terrible yells.

"Help! H—e—l—p! I'm d—y—i—n—g!"

At about five o'clock a farmer passed by in a cart. He picked him up and wrapped him in a rug, turned back to the city, and put him down at the door of his house. . . .

II

Great was the astonishment of his nephew and neighbours. Questions rained on the battered cobbler. But the latter answered none of them. He was not heard to say a word for many days. He seemed to have been struck dumb.

But one day, at about three o'clock, voices were heard on the stairs, speaking of an excursion into the country:

"Let us go out for the afternoon."

"What lovely weather!"

"Tell the cousins to come with us, to enjoy the fine weather!"

And Uncle Gaspar, disdainfully raising his head and looking at the sky, said to himself in the solitude of his attic:

"Lovely weather. . . . What a thrashing those donkey-drivers will be getting!"

CARLOS COELLO

1850-1888

TIERRA-TRAGONA

I

In the early days of May in the year 1601 nothing else was spoken of in the city of Valladolid, where the Court of Philip III. was then fixed, but the Royal Decree ordering an inventory to be taken of all the wrought silver existing in the Kingdom. This was the celebrated device by means of which the Duke of Lerma hoped to find a remedy for the poverty of Spain. Perhaps one other thing was talked of—the scandalous adventures of Don Guillen Calleja.

Don Guillen was a young man of about twenty-four years of age, good-looking and self-willed, the son of a powerful nabob, who, after having brought the lad up on the principle of a tight rein and a close purse, committed the imprudence of dying, leaving him heir to an immense fortune, and absolutely his own master. Calleja plunged into a life of pleasure just as a young high-mettled colt plunges into a mad race across the fields, when, tired of champing the bit, he has the joy of seeing it fall broken into fragments at his feet. His life was one constant round of amusements, and he had time only for one love affair after another, for gambling and for duelling. No thought ever came to him of the uncertainty of life, the danger of losing his fortune, or that of losing his soul, the greatest and most irremediable danger of all.

At that time, which dramatists depict to us as having been so full of romance, very little account was taken of a stab or so (that is, of course, if it was given to a humble individual), and whilst Don Guillen, a swashbuckler who could give long odds even to Don Francisco de Quevedo himself, was content to stab bullies and gamesters, he could rely on the careful lack of attention on the part of what passed for Justice, who was always disposed to keep her eyes shut whenever she was invited to hold out her hands and not withdraw them empty.

But it so happened that the devil, who never sleeps (and is indeed always on the watch), set going a rivalry in a love affair between our hero and a certain nephew of Don Pedro Martin de Andueza, private physician to His Majesty; and this brought about

a duel between the two rivals, the result of which was that the nephew in question lost his life.

Now the doctor loved his sister's son like the apple of his eye, the Duke of Lerma had for Don Martin that respectful friendship which is only due to a doctor of high authority; and the King, who approved of everything done by his favourite physician (to whom he did not give the smallest trouble professionally), signed an order in which, with due regard to the spiritual welfare of the nabob's son, he commanded Don Guillen to be arrested, his confession to be heard, and his execution to be carried out—all within the exact period of three hours.

The Mayor of the city was charged with the fulfilment of this order, so graciously conceived, and as he was told to take very great pains for the apprehension of the unfortunate Calleja, he went to find the latter and said to him: "The King orders me to arrest you and have you hanged: I am in a difficulty, for you are a good friend of mine, and at the same time I am a loyal and faithful subject of my Sovereign. Take to your heels and get out of danger if you can in the five minutes' grace which I am going to give you: when that interval is over I will have you hanged wherever I catch you."

Don Guillen was of such a modest disposition that he did not want to attract the attention of the whole of Valladolid, so he filled his pockets with gold, mounted his best horse, and left the city at a pace which I leave to the imagination of my reader.

II

The aristocratic rake rode on all night without knowing where he was or whither he was going, and when dawn broke and he was beginning to feel a little relieved by the thought that his friend the Mayor was not going to try to catch him, his horse, covered with foam and sweat, gave clear indications of not being able to continue his career. His anxious rider struck the spurs once more into his side, and the noble animal made one last effort and then fell dead, throwing Don Guillen to the ground, where he lay bruised and aching for a long time. At last he got up and looked around him, most agreeably surprised at not seeing even the shadow of a Mayor or the least sign of a sheriff's officer.

The day was so fine that Don Guillen, although not exactly in the mood to admire the beauties of nature, could not help perceiving, when the sun's beams illuminated the landscape, that this place had nothing in common with the arid plains of Old Castile. But still, in two or three hours he could not have got very far from the town of Pisuerga, even riding at break-neck pace. Calleja found himself in the midst of a fresh and pretty vale, in which all

sorts of trees and flowers flourished, and away in the distance, but not so far as not to be reached without much fatigue, he saw a fine town which he did not remember ever having seen before, although he had frequently ridden all over the neighbourhood, shooting hares and partridges in the fields and wild birds over the lakes.

" What town is that? " he asked a passing peasant.

" Tierra-Tragona," was the reply.

The name, which Don Guillen had never heard, surprised him even more than the appearance of the town; but he was in need of rest, and at the same time he hoped to be able to find there some place in which he could hide from the attentions of his friend the Mayor. So he went on boldly to Tierra-Tragona, and soon arrived in the town.

III

If Tierra-Tragona looked attractive from a distance, the eyes and the mind of Don Guillen were enchanted with a nearer view of it, for he had never seen anything like it in his life. The splendour of the city, the richness of its buildings, the width of its streets, and the sumptuousness of its monuments exceeded anything of which we can dream in our wildest visions of an enchanted city. And this charm was added to by the circumstance that the greater number of the people in the streets wore magnificent clothes and went about with gay laughter and happy faces; even those who appeared to be members of the working-classes seemed to share the animation of the others.

" Is there any popular celebration going on here to-day? Is it the festival of the patron saint of the town? "

The girl to whom Don Guillen addressed this question, and who had in her hand a ring, the splendour of which contrasted oddly with the poverty of her attire, looked at him with some surprise and replied:

" No, sir. To-day is like any other day to us. This is the land of cheerfulness, no one has any trouble here, nor is there any reason why people should be sad."

And shutting the ring up in her closed hand and looking slyly at Don Guillen, the girl ran off singing and dancing gaily.

IV

Calleja walked through the streets and squares admiring everything that he saw and wondering why such a charming town should have such an ugly name (for Tierra-Tragona means the Gluttonous Land), when stepping aside to make room for some person who was advancing in an opposite direction, he stared in amazement,

uttered a cry, an awful cry of fear, and shrank back into the shadow of a doorway, where he remained as if glued to the spot and incapable of motion.

What had Calleja seen?

A handsome, healthy-looking young man, radiating happiness from his countenance, but dressed in a strange manner, had suddenly staggered, the ground had opened under his feet and had completely swallowed him up.

Some of the people passing in the street had observed the incident, had stopped to talk about it, and then the animation of the people, which had only been interrupted for a moment, began again over the very spot where the event had taken place.

This indifference horrified Don Guillen just as much as the occurrence itself, and he had not the strength to move from the spot where he remained fixed and hidden, almost invisible to the sight of every one.

When he had recovered himself a little, he began to listen to a conversation which was being carried on in a neighbouring balcony between a very beautiful woman and a gay cavalier. The meaning of what he heard was that the lady gave the gentleman the information that her husband would soon be going away for a time; and then both made an appointment for a meeting on the night of his absence, taking undue advantage of his confidence in them. They were still talking and exchanging endearing words, mingling tender expressions with jests against the deceived husband, when all at once the ground opened again and engulfed the lover who was standing under the balcony. The lady uttered a scream, but was soon calm again, and did not even leave the window, and the few curious passers-by who had stopped on hearing her cry, only shrugged their shoulders and continued their way in various directions.

Don Guillen decided to escape from his hiding-place and flee from the town at full speed, but he could not stir; and in a few moments he overheard another conversation which was taking place near him between two men of unpleasant appearance. They asked each other, like two friends who had not met for a long time, how they were getting on in life. One of them kept a gaming-house, and made good profits out of the unfortunate pigeons who came to be plucked under his roof by means of various cheating devices. The other lent money to the sons of rich men, at interest amounting to ten times the sum lent; the money to be repaid when the father died —thus demoralising and impoverishing the younger generation at the same time. They were about to separate after gaily calculating their ill-gotten gains for the day, when the very same thing happened to the usurer as had happened to the unknown passer-by

and to the would-be seducer of the wife; but the other man continued on his way without concerning himself about the fate of his friend and comrade.

And what Don Guillen saw in the cases related above continued to be repeated in the cases of others, which he saw again and again as he remained crouching in his corner. The same fate overtook the woman of evil life, who with brazen painted face and gaudy dress walked the street in calm indifference to modesty, thinking of anything rather than of her sins; the paid bravo who with his unworthy courage took the place of those who were too cowardly to revenge themselves on their enemies in person; the dissolute and foolish youth who shrinks from no course which he thinks will lead to pleasure; even the wretched pickpocket on the watch to profit by the unsuspiciousness of others.

All happened in the presence of the stranger overwhelmed with anxiety and horror, and at last his intelligence and his heart, wounded by so many impressions, so different but all so terrible, permitted him to collect his wits and to form the following reflections which crowded on him tumultuously:

" These people never seem to have any security in their lives; these people appear to be faced with death at any moment, from what I have seen happen here at every step. How can they remain in such awful indifference to death? Why do they not repent of their sins and amend their evil lives? "

A light touch on his shoulder caused him to turn, and he found himself face to face with an old monk, who issued from the door against which Don Guillen was leaning, and which was the entrance to a Dominican monastery.

" Tell me, my brother," said the monk to our hero; " in what country may your honour have been born? "

" I, sir? I was born in Seville, and now I have come here from Valladolid," murmured Calleja, quite surprised that his reflections should have been overheard by any one.

The monk continued:

" And those cities? Are they free from the dangers which cause you so much fear in this town? Does the earth never open there for any one? Is any one certain of the continuance of his existence there? Is there no one there who, given up to vice, spends his life without suspecting that death may assail him when he least expects it, without giving him time to repent and amend his mode of conduct? "

The words of the monk snatched from the thoughtless young man the veil of ignorance which had blinded the eyes of his reason, and he could now see and judge of everything with a clearness unknown before.

Kneeling at the feet of the monk and covering his face with his

hands, through which rolled tears of noble shame and penitence, he implored confession of his sins and peace for his soul.

Both entered the monastery, and Don Guillen's prayer was acceded to. Being given a refuge in the holy place, his thoughts dwelt on the possibility of spending the remainder of his days with those good monks, fearing to be once more launched on the stormy sea in which such terrible dangers were to be encountered.

After having his vocation tested by a year's novitiate, Calleja assumed the monk's habit, and it is said that as he passed through the streets of the dissolute town which he sought to save, wrapped in his gown of coarse sackcloth, he enjoyed the greatest of pleasures in the peace of his conscience; and the former sinner awaited with calmness, without the slightest fear, but rather with joyful anticipation, the opening of the unstable ground of Tierra-Tragona beneath his feet.

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

1851–1921

THE SOUTHERN EXPRESS

Across the level fields cultivated like gardens, sprinkled with white houses, their red roofs gleaming under a bright warm sun, the train of first-class carriages ran on, on towards Paris. The country people, the market gardeners, who led their mule-carts full of garden stuff, looked at the swiftly-passing train with that peculiar impression of respectful envy which is inspired by the sight of what is inaccessible in our ordinary social life.

Through the lofty, clear glass windows a glimpse could be caught for a moment of the tables in the dining-car, and of people sitting at them, able to eat and drink what they liked. It was like a cinematographic picture, disappearing at the moment of greatest interest behind the wide trail of smoke, and lost in the distance, and the mere ordinary action of having something to eat, attended by waiters in correct style, acquired in the eyes of the spectators, owing to the speed of the train, and the instantaneous nature of the picture, an aristocratic and romantic splendour.

When we crossed the frontier I had huddled myself up in a corner of the saloon carriage, leaving my bag and my yellow-covered novel on the table fixed to the floor, and watching through my grey gauze veil my companions of a few hours' travel with the keen curiosity of one who finds himself in an unknown but fruitful country. They were South American families, with their dark-complexioned children, dressed in the latest English fashions; ladies travelling alone, perfumed, and loudly dressed; elderly ladies attired in a manner which suggested wealth; stiff, reserved English ladies, who sat upright and escaped in some perfectly unaccountable way the invasion of the coal-dust, always keeping their dainty pink cheeks clean and their hair, like spun gold, immaculately smooth. And finally, there were young couples quite wrapped up in each other, who did not care a straw for the lookers-on, and who lived apart in a murmur of honeymoon confidences.

One of these couples sat so near me that their chatter kept my attention off what I was reading, so that I closed the novel by

Danilewsky and preferred to turn to the page of real life close at my side—without suspecting that in it I would find, instead of an idyll, the elements of a gloomy drama. However, it was the idyll which first appeared, and even forced itself on my notice, with all the insistence of legitimate happiness and with the nonsense which is for ever the right of happy lovers.

My honeymoon couple—for such I deemed them to be—did not want to breakfast in the dining-car. Neither did I, for the shaking of the train tired me. The reasons which led them to seek solitude were no doubt very different from mine; they wanted to be alone to be refreshed by each other's company only. I gathered this when I heard them utter an exclamation of joy as nearly everybody left the carriage, and noted a gesture of impatience, so pronounced as to amount to a display of temper, on the part of the woman when she saw that I did not leave my seat. As they could not get me out of my place, they finally appeared to resign themselves to the inevitable, and to forget that I was there. They took the little square hamper down from the rack, and prepared to lunch together.

She was young, fair, tall, and slim, with that graceful slimness which appears to have no angles, and which is the special attribute of Parisian women. She wore a soft, grey cloth travelling dress, and her little grey cloth toque had as its sole trimming two white pigeon's wings, quivering as if ready for flight. She sat close to her companion and spread a single napkin over his knees. He was young too, dark, thin, and sallow, but attractive in that moment in his evident delight in his bride's attentiveness and in his anticipation of their little picnic together. She took parcel after parcel out of the little hamper, and as each parcel was opened, some special delicacy appeared. Sandwiches of paté de foie gras, pink and white slices of York ham, little square pieces of chicken, tiny patties, each containing a mouthful of some tit-bit; oysters embedded separately in jellied white sauce. And the opening of each parcel was greeted with cries of delighted surprise from the husband, and proud and happy giggles from the wife.

"Why, you think of everything! What forethought! This is a real feast." She played at secrets all the time.

"Just wait a bit. You haven't seen all yet."

From the little hamper she took a small bottle of Burgundy, a siphon of soda-water, some silver drinking-cups, and a corkscrew. Nothing was lacking. They sat with their knees pressed close together, so as to be able to accommodate the single napkin, and no doubt also to feel that they were alone together in this their first honeymoon meal, which they proceeded to despatch. Despatch, did I say? No, there was no despatch about it. They lingered over the opening of each little white paper parcel, whispering,

touching the tips of their fingers daintily, each most anxious for the other to enjoy the feast to the full.

"Another bit? Do you like the ham? Now I am going to give you some wine."

All the time tender glances and happy laughter over every trifle —the rattling of the little china plates, the spilling of the wine gleaming in the silver cups as the train hastened in its onward march.

I could not help watching them covertly, as they played thus like two happy children, but my attention was aroused by something which struck me as strange in the bride's behaviour. Two or three times she made excuses to leave her husband's side, and to manage to pass the door of communication with the next carriage, into which she threw a rapid glance. The only occupant of the carriage next to ours was a man, who sat huddled in a corner, with a checked cloth cap pulled down over his face, and either asleep or pretending to sleep. Only the lower part of his face was visible, a well-formed, strong young mouth and chin, with a small fair moustache partly shading the red upper lip. Each time the bride passed the door opposite to where he sat, the stranger, as I must call him for want of a better name, moved his cap slightly, and a gleam appeared to dart from the eyes half-covered by the peak of the cap. Was this really the case, or did I fancy it? Was I dreaming, or was my sight deceived by the jolting of the train? I could swear that what I saw was a real fact.

But if it was real fact, what was the meaning of the idyll of the little feast? And now, when the dessert was being brought out, the idyll grew still prettier and more interesting. I kept watch under the cover of my veil, and noted the solitary traveller crouching in his corner and the happy young couple giggling over a gleaming bunch of grapes which the bride dangled in the air. Their fingers touched as they picked off the grapes, their lips touched as they nibbled them like rabbits, laughing, chattering, uttering the broken words of endearment used by honeymoon couples all the world over. When the yellow grapes were all gone, a cardboard box came out of the wonderful hamper, and the lid came off, revealing rows on rows of chestnuts coated with snowy icing, like soldiers of the Middle Ages in their gleaming coats of mail. The little play went on—nibbling a chestnut until their lips met, giggling, pretending to quarrel as to who should be the next to pick out the biggest and best chestnut. I must admit that when I had noticed them first they sat so quietly together that I did not imagine they were a honeymoon couple; I thought they might be brother and sister. But now no doubt remained—they were behaving as honeymoon couples behave everywhere in the intoxication of their new companionship, wrapped up in each other and heeding no one

else. This was no brother-and-sister affection, but a real, romantic love-match, and though I was amused by their childishness, I blessed them in my heart.

. . . . . .

She rose to take another little parcel out of the hamper, no doubt containing fruit or something sweet to crown the little feast. All at once she looked about the carriage, and uttered a piercing cry of dismay: "My bag! My Russia leather bag! Oh, where is it? Where could I have put it?"

"Shall I go and look for it?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, I should be so glad if you would, dear. I think I must have left it in the rack of the sleeping-car."

He went off to look for the bag, and I shivered with a sort of instinctive horror at what I felt was happening. For when the bride was undoing the hamper containing the parcels of dainties, I had noted her taking her Russia leather bag with shining silver fittings and carefully concealing it under the seat. But almost before I had time to remember this, and even before her husband had crossed the corridor separating the carriages from one another, she had rushed into the next carriage, swift as a bird to its nest, to be met in her flight half-way by the lonely traveller in the cap. He had risen as if at a signal and run to clasp her in his arms. No word was spoken, no sound of any kind was uttered. They clung silently to each other in a mad embrace in which the two seemed to be as one, like a statue which can only be broken asunder by a knife or a hatchet.

How long did this strange, dangerous embrace last? Perhaps a second, perhaps five minutes or more. I sat with my eyes fixed on them, hardly believing what I saw. They did not move; they did not seem even to breathe or to concern themselves about any one or anything, whilst I, on the contrary, was quivering with nervous terror. My heart throbbed, I could scarcely breathe, and the perspiration gathered on my forehead and rolled down in drops that blinded me. I felt that I ought to do something, to say something, and yet I sat chained to my corner like the victim of a terrible nightmare. I looked helplessly for the coming of the only person who had any right to intrude on the strange drama—the betrayed young husband, who was engaged in a fruitless search for the Russia leather bag whose gleaming silver fittings shone from under the seat, where it had been so carefully and craftily placed.

At last they separated and I could breathe again. She came back to her place in my compartment, her fair head drooping as she passed me. When she took her place opposite to me, she gave me such a look! Agony and entreaty were combined in that one desperate appeal. The stranger had returned to his corner and

was again crouching under the shelter of his cap, apparently dozing as before. And while I was still asking myself if I, too, was asleep and dreaming, the young husband came back. He had searched everywhere for the missing Russia leather bag—he had roused all the train officials, but no trace of it could be found. The bride listened to what he had to say, and then laughed happily and kissed him for his trouble on her behalf, holding out the bag at arm's length.

"Forgive all the trouble I have given you, darling. I *am* a silly little thing. I found it where I dropped it behind the seat when I was taking down the hamper!" He was not in the least annoyed or cross with her. They sat down together as before, and she took a last white paper parcel out of the little square hamper. Rosy peaches, warmed by the southern sun, crowned the honeymoon feast, and they nibbled them together as before.

. . . . . .

All the rest of the way nothing happened—absolutely nothing. They sat together, whispered, petted each other, read newspapers and talked over what they read, cheek pressed against cheek, slept, holding each other's hands, she with her head on his shoulder, and later in the evening, they went off to the dining-car for their meal together.

When the train drew up at the platform of the great station, and the travellers went their different ways, I caught a last glimpse of the couple going arm-in-arm to a cab, followed by a porter carrying the rugs, the little empty hamper, and the Russia leather bag. I wondered again if I had only been dreaming. . . .

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

THE PINK PEARL

THIS is what an unfortunate friend of mine said to me:

"It is only the man who shuts himself up all day and works long hours in the night in order to earn money enough to satisfy the caprices of the woman loved who can comprehend the pleasure of saving up little by little a fixed sum of money to be used to gratify even her vainest and most trifling whim. What she thought of only as a hopeless dream, what even in her wildest imagination seemed an impossible wish, spurred me on to make the efforts which were to render that wish an accomplished fact. The idea that my work and my affection could place what she longed for in her hands was so delightful to me that I dwelt on the thought of her surprise, her admiration, and the clasp of her soft arms round my neck in her transport of coming gratitude.

"My only fear, as I sallied forth with my well-filled pocket-book in my hand and my mind full of joyful anticipation, was that the jeweller might have already found another customer. I wanted to see Lucilla's delight when I placed in her hands the two exquisite pink pearls for which she had longed so much as she hung on my arm and gazed into the shop window. It is so difficult to find two such perfect pearls, alike in shape and colour, gleaming with such an admirable tint, so entirely matched in roundness and size, that I thought it impossible that some rich woman should not have already secured them and locked them safely up in her jewel case. If this had happened, I should have been so miserable that the bare idea of it set my heart throbbing, and I felt a choking sense of relief when I saw the two beautiful pearls in their diamond setting still lying in their white velvet case, flanked on one side by a magnificent diamond necklace, and on the other by a bunch of gold bracelets.

"I fully expected to be asked to pay dearly for my fancy, but still the price asked by the jeweller took me aback when I inquired what he was prepared to take for the pearls. All that I had saved, and even something more, would have to be invested in those tiny things, no bigger than a couple of peas. I hesitated—for buying jewels is not an everyday occupation for a man of my means—and wondered if the jeweller was not taking advantage of my ignorance and asking me for a ridiculous sum in the belief that I was no judge

of the value of such things. And while I was considering the matter, I looked out of the shop window and saw my old friend and fellow-student and my best friend of that day, Gonzaga Llorente. To see his familiar face and to run out to call him were one and the same idea. Who could advise me in the matter of the pink pearls so well as the elegant Gonzaga, who was so well up in all relating to fashions, to what was done in the world by people of wealth and refinement, among whom he was so popular, so much sought after, that I could never feel sufficiently grateful to him for coming, as he did come so often, to my modest home? It was so good of a man like him to take any notice of us at all!

"Gonzaga appeared surprised and delighted when I ran out to call him, and he came with me to the jeweller's shop, whilst I told him what I wanted him to do. He admired the lovely pink pearls, and said that several rich ladies of his acquaintance in society would pay any price asked for such rare things to wear as earrings, which was just the purpose for which they had been set in a tiny frame of brilliants. He took me aside and assured me that the price asked by the jeweller was not excessive in view of the marvellous beauty of the pearls; I felt reassured by his words, and was only held back from completing the bargain by my shame at having to confess that I had not money enough. At last I admitted to Gonzaga that much as I wished to make my wife a present of the pink pearl earrings, I was not really able to pay for them. Gonzaga did what any friend would do in such circumstances; he opened his pocket-book and handed me some bank notes, and at the same time he laughed and swore that if I would not accept such a trifling service at his hands he would cut me dead whenever he met me in future. How I suffered! I did not dare to accept the loan, fearing that I might not be able to repay it, and yet I could not take such valuable earrings home unless the full price was paid. At last my wish to please my wife conquered, and I felt so happy that I could have knelt down and kissed the hand which enabled me to make her such a gift. I invited Gonzaga to lunch with us next day and to see me give the pink pearl earrings to my wife; and we separated with this understanding. I went home with the little case in my pocket, and felt as if I had wings on my shoulders.

"Lucilla was dusting and arranging the drawing-room when I came back. She looked at me, and when I said, 'Search my pockets to see what I have in them,' she jumped, clapped her hands in her lively and childish way, and cried, 'Oh, a present for me. Let me find it!' She turned all my pockets inside out and tickled me all the time, until at last she got hold of the little case. I shall never forget the cry of joy which she uttered when she saw the pearls. Then she pulled my face down and covered it with kisses, saying that I was the best and kindest husband a woman ever had.

I cannot help thinking that she really did love me in that moment. I had let her think that it was quite impossible for me to buy the pink pearls, and this little surprise was quite unexpected by her. In my pleasure at her happiness I could not wait to let her wear the earrings next day; I made her take the little gold rings out of her ears, and as I was not disposed to make any mystery, I fastened in the little pink pearls which she had longed for so much that her ears were rosy with the delight which radiated from her whole being. It hurts me bitterly now to think of all these loving follies—and alas, I shall never be able to cease remembering them.

. . . . . .

Next day was Sunday, and Gonzaga kept his appointment to come and lunch with us. We were all happy and even noisy in our gaiety. Lucilla had put on her best dress—a grey silk, which suited her so well, and she had pinned a pink rose in her bodice, of the very same shade as the pink pearls in her ears. Gonzaga brought us tickets for the theatre, and we all spent a merry and very joyous evening. Next day I had to go back to work, and even to work overtime, to try to make up what I owed my good friend for what he had paid for the pearls. When I got home and sat down to dinner with Lucilla, my first glance was at her pretty little ears. I sprang up and uttered a cry as I saw that one of the little rings of diamonds was empty. The pink pearl was missing.

" ' You have lost a pearl,' I exclaimed.

" ' You don't say so! ' replied my wife, passing her finger over her ears and feeling the jewels in them. When she found that the pearl was really gone, she seemed so terrified that I was alarmed too, not because of the pearl, but at the sight of Lucilla's anguish of mind.

" ' Don't worry so much,' I said to her at last. ' It must be somewhere about. Let us look for it, and it will surely turn up.'

" We searched everywhere. We shook the carpet, turned up all the rugs, examined the folds of the curtains, moved out all the furniture, and even opened boxes which Lucilla declared she had not touched for months previously. When all our search was vain, Lucilla sat down and wept bitterly. I asked her:

" ' Were you out anywhere to-day? '

" ' Yes. Oh, yes, I did go out,' she replied as if considering.

" ' Where did you go, dear? '

" ' Oh, I went to several places. I went out to . . . to buy things.'

" ' What shops did you go to? '

" ' I forget now. Oh, yes, I went to the Post Office and to some places in the same street. I went to the draper's shop in the Square —to the Parade, and . . .'

" ' Did you walk or go in a cab or bus? '

" ' I walked at first. Then I took a cab.'

" ' Where did you take it? Did you notice the number? '

" ' No, I don't think I did. Oh, no, how should I notice it? It was just a cab which was passing, and I was so tired,' said Lucilla, beginning to sob again.

" ' Well, but, my dear, be reasonable.' She was quite hysterical. ' You must surely remember what shops you were in. I will go round and ask in each of them, if you will give me a list. I will have an advertisement printed.'

" ' Oh, I can't remember. Do leave me in peace! ' she cried pettishly. And pitying her evident grief for the loss of my gift, I said no more just then.

" We spent a very unhappy night. I could not sleep, and I watched Lucilla too, turning and weeping furtively, pretending to sleep so as not to disturb me, but not succeeding in being able to keep quiet, whilst I went on thinking what to do to get on the track of the lost pearl. I rose early, and decided to let Lucilla sleep, as she was doing uneasily, and to go and ask advice from my good and sensible friend, Gonzaga Llorente. I had an idea that the police in the case of lost treasures might be able to find out where they were, and I hoped that Gonzaga with his wide influence and experience might assist me in this very serious and important inquiry.

" ' My master is asleep,' said the servant. ' But come in, sir. If you will wait in the study for a little while, I will let you know when he can see you. In ten minutes' time I will take him in his chocolate, and then I will tell him that you are here.' The man could not help remarking my anxiety and impatience.

" I had to make up my mind to wait, so the servant opened the shutters in the study and invited me to enter. The place had an odour of cigarette smoke and of perfumes. What would have happened, I wonder, if I had been able to go straight into my friend's room without having to wait?

" What did happen was that as soon as the first ray of light entered the shutters which the man was opening, and even before he had time to request me to take a seat, I saw something gleam from amid the fur of the white bearskin rug mounted on blue cloth which was spread at the foot of the luxurious Turkish couch. It was the lost pink pearl!

" If what passed through my mind at the sight of it had passed through yours, and if you had asked me what you ought to do in such a case, I would certainly have said with the greatest sincerity, ' You should have taken down a sword from the trophy displayed above the couch, rushed into the room of the sleeping traitor, and made sure that he would never wake again.'

" But do you know what I did do? I stooped down, picked up

the pearl and slipped it into my pocket, left the house quietly and went home. My wife was up and was dressing, but looking very uneasy. I stood looking at her, and I did not strangle her, but in a calm voice I told her to put in her earrings. Then I took the pearl out of my pocket, held it out between my fingers and said: 'Here is what you have lost; and you see it did not take me long to find it.'

"Then a sudden blind fury took possession of me, and I felt as if mad with the desire for revenge. I rushed at her, tore the earrings from her ears, and trampled them under foot. I did not murder her; I do not know why, but I ran downstairs and into the nearest bar, where I asked for a glass of brandy.

"Did I ever see Lucilla again? Yes, once. She was leaning on the arm of a man who was *not* Gonzaga. And I noticed that the lobe of her left ear was disfigured by a scar as if it had been torn down the middle. No doubt that was my doing, though I did not remember doing it."

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

THE GREEN FLY

We were enjoying or rather trying to enjoy the fresh air, on the great terrace of Alborada, on a broiling and enervating August afternoon—one of the very few which in that mild climate burn with the rage of the dog-star. The air was saturated, not only with the warm, resinous, pungent scent of the neighbouring pine woods, but also with other peculiar odours; the musky smell of ants and beetles, honey and sweet honeycomb wax; and in the warm atmosphere there was a swarm of dancing insects of all kinds—butterflies of every hue, flies glowing like precious stones and tiny atoms of enamel, " St. Anthony's cows "—those tiny black scarabs gleaming as if newly gone into mourning, ephemeral flies like scraps of transparent gauze, coral-hued ladybirds with black dots on their dainty wing-cases, gnats and mosquitoes like brown silk; and in the sand there was a constant turmoil of sandhoppers like riders practising steeplechasing; and the dainty, bright-hued, and graceful creeping insects of the country made their little slow pilgrimages, looking so much more attractive than their town cousins—the creeping insects of our houses!

We leaned back in our seats, talking at intervals only, feeling lazy, and anxiously awaiting the first breath of the cool evening which would come to fan our temples. The subject of our conversation was the enervating effect which heat produces on our strength, and we discussed the strange psychological influence exercised by different climates, a fact which is now being seriously recognised by historians.

One of us, a scientific physician, said:

" There is no doubt that firmness of character is an excellent thing, and we ought to use all our efforts to develop it. The man was not far from the mark who said that every one could shape his own destiny. And yet, this wealth of Nature which surrounds us and even oppresses us produces on me an impression of fatality which is so profound that I can hardly bring myself to struggle against it. What are we human creatures against the forces of Nature? "

" Why, we are everything! " exclaimed another of us who was a philosopher. " We have conquered the forces of Nature; we have

laid them at our feet and obliged them to serve us. Each day finds us more and more in a position of victory in our struggle against them, and our ability to dominate them."

"On the contrary they are recovering lost ground. And after all, we cannot conquer ourselves," replied the doctor pensively. And as the sun sank behind the chestnut trees in all its golden splendour, and a gust of wind laden with fresh water-drops came to us from the neighbouring mill-wheel as it stopped in its course, and roused our flagging energies by its coolness, the doctor decided to relate to us an episode which had occurred in the course of his professional experience.

"I was spending my summer holiday in the quiet country village of Caldasrojas," said he, "and there I came across a very pleasant young acquaintance. He was the only son of a widow, and every evening we went for walks together through the sweet country lanes and the quiet hill-paths. By degrees he told me of his hopes, his aspirations, and his hard struggles for life. The death of his father had left the boy and his mother in very narrow circumstances, and the efforts of the widow to keep her head above water and to put her son forward in the world had left their effect on the mind of the lad. Torcuato—that was his name—was a man before other boys are thinking of leaving school, and, above all things, he developed in consequence of his seriousness of disposition a very great and persevering strength of will. Nothing dismayed him, nothing discouraged him, and he acquired a specially brilliant understanding of life, which appeared in his behaviour as well as in his artistic creative faculties. At the early age of eleven Torcuato kept the books of a tradesman in the ancient University city in which he lived; when he was thirteen he obtained the same work for several different employers, and succeeded in earning in this way sufficient to maintain his mother and himself; and at the same time he studied hard, working at his books late into the night, thus depriving himself of sleep, which is so necessary to youth at the critical period of development. It would be more like the truth to say that the lad passed from boyhood to manhood without being himself conscious of the change, and he had no 'troublesome age' which so often causes anxiety to parents and schoolmasters. No follies, no idle objects of curiosity or pleasure ever attracted Torcuato, or diverted him from his onward progress towards the object of his life. His existence was regulated like that of a fine chronometer, not a fraction of a second was ever lost. Every instant was marked out in which he was to rise, wash, and dress, to sleep, to take his meals; and he kept most rigorously to the programme which he had set for himself. Or it would perhaps be more correct of me to say that he even robbed himself of some of the time appointed for his requirements as a human being, and he effected work of an almost

superhuman perfection of regularity, so as to earn enough for his entrance into the University and the expenses which were absolutely inevitable. No task was too mean for his pride to undertake; he would even have worked as a bootblack if he could have earned any money or sufficient money by doing so. He wrote essays and lectures for the older students, sermons for the ecclesiastics in the University, prospectuses for manufacturers, reports for company secretaries; everything which might bring him in a little money and an acquaintance likely to be of use to him. Finally, he passed all his examinations brilliantly, and obtained a position in the University itself, modestly remunerated it is true, but still affording him the means to hope on and to continue working, so as to be able to embark on the career of which he dreamed.

" I asked Torcuato if he had never been ill; for an illness is just the thing which ruins the hopes of those who have barely sufficient to make ends meet without any lapping over. He replied:

" ' Ill? I have never had the time to be ill. The only thing which ever troubled me a little was my digestion, and that is why I have come to take a little rest in Caldasrojas, without my mother, and just for a little change—the very first bit of idleness I have ever had in my life. I am quite delighted with it all; it is a sort of intoxication to me after my long toil to be able to enjoy the free open air and the perfume of the flowers and trees! But you must not think that I am not keeping to my rule all the same. Although I am young and my youthful inclinations mount to my head and even to my heart also with an imperious insistence, yet my will reigns supreme. I am fully master of myself; and I will allow nothing in this world to interfere with my intention to assure the future of my mother, to give her a restful and happy old age, and to make a way in the world for myself. I know that I have some intelligence and some ability: another man might perhaps waste this important capital, but I will on the contrary make it bring me in returns which will go on increasing. Where there's a will there's a way. Why the Bible itself shows us that this is true.'

" Torcuato told me this one evening as we were coming back from the direction of the sea-shore along the road traversed by the carts carrying produce for export. Our conversation was punctuated by the shrill creaking of the cart-wheels as they toiled along slowly, not raising any dust, in the sombre calm of the evening sun sinking to its rest. I shall never forget the scene. Two heavy carts passed us in an opposite direction to ours, and they were loaded with partly tanned ox-hides, such as are sent to the coast steamers for export to England. The setting sun's last rays were reflected in the copper-coloured skins spotted with yellowish white. Torcuato raised his right hand to shade his eyes, and I saw something alight

on it, something with a metallic shimmer like a green spark. He shook his hand to get rid of the tiny insect.

" ' The little wretch. It has stung me! '

" I felt a shiver of uneasiness, for which there was no apparent reason, and suddenly I caught hold of Torcuato's hand. There was no sign of the sting. We continued our walk, but I did not feel inclined to talk now, and I looked furtively at my young friend from time to time. I noticed that he rubbed his hand mechanically where the sting had been planted, and presently I saw that a tiny red blister rose and presently disappeared, giving place to a discoloured depression which grew blackish as I watched it. I *felt* myself grow pale; we were still about three miles distant from the little village.

" ' Let us make haste,' I said. ' The sting is of no importance, but I would like to touch the spot with caustic all the same.'

" ' Why, my hand is swelling,' remarked Torcuato, more in surprise than alarm. I saw that he was unaware of the terrible consequences which may result from the sting of those beautiful little emerald-tinted flies which have settled on the hides of animals afflicted with the virulent poison of red pustule.

" ' Red pustule,' I thought, trembling with horror and pity. ' Red pustule. The most malignant plague which exists as a means of blood-poisoning.'

" I must shorten this tragic tale. When we undressed Torcuato in the back room of the little chemist's shop to treat the sting, we found that not merely his hand but his entire arm rapidly showed signs of inflammation. No doubt remained; the arm must be amputated. It was the one chance. . . . But how? We had no chloroform and scarcely any instruments. I sent to my lodging for what I had, and with horror freezing my veins and shudders of pity tearing at my heart, I was obliged to tell the unfortunate young man the truth. What a look he gave me! What a world of horror, of protest, and of grief in his eyes!

" ' My right arm! But what about my mother? What will she say when she hears it? '

" ' Summon all your fortitude, all your strong will now,' I said, if possible more horrified even than the victim himself. ' It must be done! There is absolutely no help for it.'

" How acutely I felt the torture which I had to inflict on the poor fellow. And whether on account of the delay in the operation, the hesitation to do what should be done at the first moment, or because the poison of the infection was introduced by a sheathed sting, the poor young hero could not be saved after all. I prefer not to give the details of his death, the horrifying symptoms which appeared, the rending convulsions which preceded the end. If doctors were to describe some of their cases humanity would detest

itself, as Solomon said, for ever having been born. . . . I have related to you this cruel case to show you what a tiny green fly, a beautiful little object, can do, and how powerless against the work of such an infinitesimal creature is all the force of a strong will, firm, resolute, trained, and seasoned by self-denial and hard work. No, we human beings are creatures of nothingness."

The night fell, and the glow-worms came out in all the charm of their mysterious little lanterns.

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

THE WELL OF LIFE

THE caravan went on, leaving the sick camel-driver at the brink of the well. All caravans stop there on account of the reputation of the water, about which so many things are said. Some say that it restores flagging energies at a draught, others that its properties are strange, terrible, and even fatal.

The followers of Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed and the man who had the task of continuing the religious and political work of the Prophet, profess a special respect for that well. They say that the generous and unfortunate Prince, who was victorious over the army of his declared foe, Aixa or Aja, the widow of the Prophet, slaked his thirst in it on the day of his decisive victory. As all the faithful know, the Prophet's widow fell from her camel during the battle and was respectfully raised and pardoned by Ali, who had sent her back in safety to Mecca. It is said that it was from this period that the discussion as to the qualities of the water of the Well of Life arose. It is reported that when the celebrated Aixa, who was one of the only four incomparable women who ever lived in this world, touched the water with her lips after having been defeated and made prisoner, she declared that its taste was unendurable.

The camel-driver was not thinking of the taste of the water. He watched the disappearance of the cloud of dust raised by the departing caravan and considered himself shipwrecked in the sea of sand of the desert.

It is true that the well was surrounded by what is called an oasis; ten or a dozen palm trees, and a small construction of brick and plaster intended as a drinking-trough for the camels and a resting-place for a short time for the pilgrims on their way to the distant mosque—that was all that the solitary oasis contained. Devoured by the heat, which dried up the blood in his veins, the camel-driver, who had always been sober and frugal, hardly gave a thought to food now, to the bread and dates which formed his usual meal. His sustenance was only spring water.

" They do well to call it the Well of Life. In a few days I shall feel better. I will go on drinking it."

Two or three days went by. The deserted man kept dipping his

earthenware bowl in the skin of water, which his companions had taken care to fill and place beside him in pitying forethought before they went on their onward way. And as he drank he thought:

" My illness must be turning my brain. Just now this water was quite delicious, and now it tastes as if there were a bitter infusion in it."

On the third day some maidens from the tribe of the Beni-Said, who had encamped a short distance away on the slope of a dry valley, came to replenish their water-skins at the well. The sick man begged them to fill his water-skin also, for he was too weak to lift it up and plunge it in the well. A young girl about fifteen years of age, slim as a gazelle, made the chain revolve, and the bucket came up full of water, cold and clear as crystal. The sick man stretched out his arms in trembling anticipation of the reviving draught, and he smiled with pleasure when the maiden gave him her bowl painted with gay colours and brimming over with the sparkling water. But no sooner had he swallowed a few drops than he made a grimace of disappointment.

" The taste is even bitterer than that of the water in the skin," he murmured in consternation.

The girl poured some more water into the bowl and drank it with evident delight, tasting it slowly as she emptied the vessel.

" What do you say about bitterness? " asked she laughingly. " Why it is fresher than the snow on the mountain's crest and sweeter than the milk of our ewes. It has revived me and done me good. I have never tasted better water. Try it, girls, and see if I am not right."

And the group of young water-seekers, before putting their replenished water-skins in the net bags slung across their asses, drank long draughts of water from the well. They laughed and jested gaily, pretending to snatch the bowls away from one another and spilling the water over their red and white striped tunics; their olive-tinted shoulders, smooth as fresh green dates, gleaming in the sun, which gilded the outline of their young bosoms and their slim rounded arms. Their oval black eyes shone as they played, and they showed their teeth, like pomegranate seeds, still whiter through the red lips refreshed by the water. Then they mounted their donkeys, perching themselves lightly among the laden water-skins, and set off back to their encampment laughing with the sheer joy of life and youth.

The camel-driver was alone once more. Just as before he had seen the dust-cloud of the caravan disappear in the distance, so now he saw another cloud of the sandy dust gather behind the heels of the trotting donkeys, urged on by their laughing riders to hasten home with the water-skins, and disperse in the far distance, not of the road—for the desert is but one immense road—but of the

illimitable sandy plain. He was consumed by fever, and in despair he drank again. The taste of the water was still more bitter than before.

The slow days dragged by. The sick man counted their passing on the large beads of the rosary which, like every pious Mohammedan, he wore fastened to his girdle. He could only count them thus, for all the days were alike. Every morning the sun's rays beat from a sky of brass; every blinding noonday was like the one that had gone before, gorgeous in wealth of light from the intensely blue pitiless heavens; every evening the same hot breath came reflected from the parched sand as the sun sank behind the distant horizon, and wild animals came from their dens and caves afar in the sandy plain. Every night the same magnificent background of the sky, studded with the brilliance of the Eastern stars: and never a cooling breeze sprang from the earth or descended from the sky. From what seemed to be a canopy of copper with a deep blue lining, the stars looked out pitilessly, as if they were the indifferent eyes of a sovereign grown careless of the sufferings of his creatures.

And the sick man, unable to resist the thirst which consumed him, drank, drank ever of the water from the well, which daily grew more bitter and repulsive to the taste; and not only daily but even with each succeeding draught. It was as though the evil spirits, to torment mankind, were dropping into the well bags of gall, handfuls of salt, every bitter drug which could make the water unpleasant to a parched palate. There came a moment when the camel-driver's strength failed him, when the mere sight of the water made him tremble, and lying down beside the well he resolved to wait for death, patient and resigned to what could not be avoided, anxious even for the release from his long suffering.

A voice which called him, a serious and authoritative voice, made him open his eyes. Before him stood a man of venerable appearance, with a long silver-white beard, and clad in a patched garment denoting poverty. He leaned on a shepherd's crook, and over his shoulder he carried the pouch which indicates the mendicant. His visage, browned by the sun, was distinguished-looking, with aristocratic features; and his eyes, fixed on the sick man, did not express pity but serene meditation; the condition of a mind familiar with the Holy Books and able to penetrate to the heart of all Life. In his right hand the venerable stranger held the bowl, as if about to drink from it.

"Do not drink, holy man," said the camel-driver. "It is as bitter as wormwood. It will only harm you. I cannot bear to drink it any more."

Without appearing to hear him, the stranger drank, but did not show any sign either of disgust or of pleasure.

"This water," said he, after he had passed across his mouth the

back of his hand baked by the blazing sun, " is neither bitter nor sweet. Its bitterness and its sweetness are contributed to it by the palate which drinks of it. Whilst you have been lying here, have you not seen others besides yourself? Have not healthy young people come to drink the water? "

" Yes," replied the camel-driver, " some young maidens came here, very happy and gay, to fetch water for their encampment. And they praised the refreshing qualities of the water."

" You see now," said the venerable stranger calmly. " May the Angel of Death take pity on you and at least permit you to be able to drink the water of the well. I would take you with me, but my ass is already too heavily loaded to be able to carry you out of this plight, and I must hasten on to join some caravan, because if I go alone the wild beasts will overtake and devour me."

And the venerable stranger went off repeating a verse of the Koran. When his dark outline disappeared against the glowing horizon the camel-driver felt that his last hope was gone. In an access of fever he approached the stonework surrounding the well, clutched it with both hands, and in his despair, but not without great efforts for his strength was not even sufficient to enable him to seek for death, he fell head foremost into the well.

. . . . . .

After the camel-driver had thrown himself into the Well of Life, the water drawn from it continued to taste sweet to some and bitter to many others. Only it must be added that when those with discriminating palates tasted it, they made the reflection that though it came from the Well of Life, its taste brought to their minds an irresistible thought of death.

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

A PAIR OF SCISSORS

"A MARRIED couple," said Father Baltar, interposing in the most natural manner in the world in the discussion of so mundane a nature, "a married couple resembles a pair of scissors."

"A pair of scissors, Father," exclaimed one of those present in some surprise. "Do you know that your comparison is an original one?"

"More than original; it is just," declared the priest, refusing by a sign the second liqueur glass of Riga kummel. "A pair of scissors, as you know, is an instrument composed of two parts which are alike or very similar, united by an axis, and fastened together by a tiny stud of the same metal. Although each half of the pair of scissors may be fine and well tempered, still if the axis is not there the scissors cannot work. But united by this central piece they can do first-rate work, and shape the web of life to perfection."

"I agree with you there," said another of those who were listening to the priest—a man of a good deal of experience of life and rather sceptical in his ideas of human nature. "But please tell us if you really believe that there are many excellent pairs of scissors to be had?"

"What is really excellent is very rare anywhere, or at least we are so readily inclined to be dissatisfied that it appears rare to us," replied with a smile the man who was both a priest and at the same time (delightful combination!) a person of admirable education. "Although the key of marriage consists in the axis, still the quality of the two blades is of a good deal of importance. Let any of you go into a shop and ask for a pair of scissors. You will be shown a couple of dozen of them, all apparently alike, and all at the same price. It is only by taking the couple of dozen home and using them that you can find out the quality of each. Dressmakers are so well aware of this that when they find a pair of scissors which suits them exactly, they will not part with it for any consideration. I have found scissors which were truly of gold! What was their peculiar attribute? Natural affection refined by the Divine Law. I will relate to you a case which I have experienced and which moved me, although it was only an

ordinary romance, and the actors in it were simple commonplace people.

"I was staying in the monastery of S—— to recover from a fever which I had caught in Tangiers, and which stuck to me like a limpet, when I happened to make the acquaintance among that of many other families of a married couple who kept a draper's shop under the colonnade of the Old Square, not far from the Cathedral. They did not come to confession to me, but to their own parish priest: however, they liked to consult me in a friendly way. Her name was Donna Consuelo and the husband's Don Andrés. As they were comfortably off and on good terms with each other, they would have been happy if they had not had a son cut out of the same piece as the wicked Barabbas, who provided them with a fresh annoyance every morning and a reason to blush for him every evening. Quarrelsome, depraved, and prodigal, neither the tears of his mother, nor the reproaches of his father, nor the exhortations which at the request of both I addressed to him from time to time, succeeded in inducing him to abandon a single one of his bad habits; and as it seemed that the young fellow was incorrigible, I advised them to send him off to some other country, where necessity and the lack of resources would oblige him to look out for himself.

"The father approved of the idea, and even the mother herself saw that it was the only thing to be done; and having found that the exile himself preferred Manilla as his place of banishment, to Manilla he was sent, with many urgent recommendations to the Rector of a monastery of our order.

"In about six months' time I began to receive good reports of the conduct of the subject of my recommendation, with praises of his abilities and of his industry; he was improving in his behaviour. When the parents heard this, they jumped for joy. It was the Rector who sent me the news which was so agreeable, because the young fellow was not much of a correspondent.

"Some time passed, until one day the Rector's letter instead of being pleasant reading conveyed terrible news. The son of Don Andrés had been stabbed to death in a quarrel when coming out of a house of ill-repute. I was asked to tell this bad news to the parents.

"It was a sad task, but we are always surrounded by sadness, and thinking that in the first moment the father would have more fortitude than the mother, I sent for Don Andrés to come to my cell, and breaking the news as gently as possible, I told him my sad tidings. He did not hesitate to understand; it seemed as though he had already guessed what was coming. As soon as I said 'wounds,' he understood 'death.' He did not weep, but the expression of his countenance was similar to that of the con-

demned man who issues from his prison door to find himself at the foot of the scaffold. I use this comparison advisedly, because I have attended some unfortunate wretches in this bitter experience.

" As soon as Don Andrés could breathe, he folded his hands, saying, ' Father, I am going to ask you a great favour. Between us both, let us manage that Consuelo does not know anything of what has happened. A few years ago my wife was plump and robust, but the misconduct of our son has ruined her health, and besides, she will soon be sixty years of age. She has a very serious internal complaint—a sort of consumption. If she heard of this misfortune, it would kill her at once. If we can hide from her what has happened to our child '—he called him this, although he was more than twenty-seven years of age—' she may live for some time yet. I will meet all the expenses which may have been incurred over there, funeral, trial, I will freely forgive my son's murderer—but Consuelo must not know anything of it all.'

" Did I do well or ill in agreeing? I do not know; but my heart bled for the unhappy man. Every fortnight or three weeks I went to the shop with fictitious letters which I was supposed to have received from Manilla, speaking of the absent young man and praising his progress in work, education, and good conduct.

" Donna Consuelo, who grew daily weaker in health and who had an incessant cough and a cruel wasting debility, always roused herself when I read these letters to her; she listened to them with a joy which was almost childish, and called Don Andrés to share her pleasure. ' You see, Andrés, what favours we receive from St. Anthony,' she would exclaim, with eyes glistening with tears called into them by joy. ' Oh, how well we are treated by Heaven. The boy has reformed; he is behaving creditably. In a short time he will be able to come back here and we will put him at the head of our business. Father Baltar, I am going to give you some money to send to him through your friends over there; you know that young men need some. I don't want my son to be deprived of anything.'

" And her husband, stifling his sorrow, choking down his sobs, would say: ' All right, my dear. Give the Father these thirty dollars, but don't agitate yourself so much. Be a sensible woman.'

" One more pathetic item. When the mother had given me a sum of money as a present for her son, the father would secretly request me to use the money for masses for the repose of the dead boy's soul.

" I played my part conscientiously, for I could see that Donna Consuelo was growing weaker in health; the shock of the news would have been more dangerous every day. Don Andrés, either because he feared some inadvertence on my part or because he

did not wish to leave the invalid, was always present when I went to pay a visit to the house. They always sat together like a pair of birds perched side by side on a branch, pressed close together to keep away the cold: she coughing and saying that her illness was 'nothing at all'; he livid, asthmatic, half-suffocated, but bracing himself up to jest with his wife and even to pay her compliments, a thing which in other circumstances would have seemed amusing to me, but which, as things were, seemed most pitiful to me.

"And still the little comedy of the letters went on, producing such an effect on the poor mother that I even fancied I saw her making signs to me when her husband was not looking at us, signals of approbation, of entreaty, of gratitude. I thought they meant: 'Even though the boy may not be always doing so well, go on telling Andrés that he is behaving like an angel.' I could only suppose this to be the case, because, as I said before, I was never an instant alone with Donna Consuelo.

"One evening I was called late to their house. Don Andrés came to tell me that his wife was dying or very near it, and that she had taken a fancy to make her confession to me. It was absolutely indispensable to invent a letter with the news that 'the child' was on his way home. 'Let us try to make her last a few days longer by making her believe that,' said he, trembling so much and so anxious that I could not refuse him that last favour. As soon as I entered the sick-room of Donna Consuelo, she looked at her husband and he went out, secretly making me an expressive sign, both warning and imploring.

"I approached the invalid's bed; she was moving her lips rapidly as if she was praying. I sat at the head of the bed and addressed to her those words of hope and consolation which are as drops of balm to a thirsty soul, and with which we clergy are accustomed to smooth the passage to the grave; but to my great surprise, she turned her face to me with an expression of profound gratitude, and seizing my hand to kiss it, said to me:

"'Father Baltar, may God reward you for all this long long time in which you have been deceiving my husband. Promise me that after I am dead you will not undeceive him.'

"'What do you mean? Deceive him?' I asked, thinking that her weakness and fever rendered her delirious.

"'If it had not been for you,' she went on without listening to me, 'it would be such a misery to Andrés if he knew about "the child." Never let him know it!'

"'About the boy,' I exclaimed, suddenly remembering my promise to Don Andrés. 'Oh, the boy is quite well, and he is coming over here—he will be able to embrace you soon!'

"'Yes, indeed, I shall embrace him . . . in the other world.

Do not trouble about me, for I knew it all along, and even my heart told me of it. Do you think that I had not some one over there whom I asked to give me news of my son? The letters came in the name of a friend of mine, so that if there were anything unpleasant to be heard, Andrés should not know of it. And as I had already written to the Father Rector begging him only to let you have good news to tell my husband, when you came with the fictitious letters saying that the child was alive and working well . . . I helped you then to deceive poor Andrés—his health is not very good and any bad news would be so dangerous for him to hear now. It has been a terrible strain for me to keep up the pretence, Father, because in all these years that we have been married I never had a secret from him before.' "

. . . . . .

Here the priest stopped his narrative, and looking round the company, he saw our faces animated by the most lively sympathy.

"So that both knew it and each concealed it from the other. What a drama of feeling!" exclaimed the one of us who had spoken first.

"You may well say, Father," said the cynic, "that those scissors were of pure gold, encrusted with the finest precious stones."

"I can also say that I have seen them extended in the form of a cross," replied the priest with deep meaning.

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

FIRST LOVE

How old was I then? Eleven or twelve years? More probably thirteen, for before then is too early to be seriously in love; but I won't venture to be certain, considering that in Southern countries the heart matures early, if that organ is to blame for such perturbations.

If I do not remember well *when,* I can at least say exactly *how* my love first revealed itself. I was very fond—as soon as my aunt had gone to church to perform her evening devotions—of slipping into her bedroom and rummaging her chest of drawers, which she kept in admirable order. Those drawers were to me a museum; in them I always came across something rare or antique, which exhaled an archaic and mysterious scent, the aroma of the sandalwood fans which perfumed her white linen.

Pincushions of satin now faded; knitted mittens, carefully wrapped in tissue paper; prints of saints; sewing materials; a reticule of blue velvet embroidered with bugles; an amber and silver rosary would appear from the corners: I used to ponder over them, and return them to their place. But one day—I remember as well as if it were to-day—in the corner of the top drawer, and lying on some collars of old lace, I saw something gold glittering. I put in my hand, unwittingly crumpled the lace, and drew out a portrait, an ivory miniature about three inches long in a frame of gold.

I was struck at first sight. A sunbeam streamed through the window and fell upon the alluring form, which seemed to wish to step out of its dark background and come towards me. It was a most lovely creature, such as I had never seen except in the dreams of my adolescence. The lady of the portrait must have been some twenty odd years: she was no simple maiden, no half-opened rosebud, but a woman in the full resplendency of her beauty. Her face was oval, but not too long; her lips were full, half-open, and smiling; her eyes cast a languishing side-glance; and she had a dimple in her chin as if formed by the tip of Cupid's playful finger.

Her head-dress was strange but elegant; a compact group of curls plastered conewise one over the other covered her temples, and a

basket of braided hair rose on the top of her head. This old-fashioned head-dress, which was trussed up from the nape of her neck, disclosed all the softness of her fresh young throat, on which the dimple of her chin was reduplicated more vaguely and delicately. As for the dress . . . I do not venture to consider whether our grandmothers were less modest than our wives are, or if the confessors of past times were more indulgent than those of the present; I am inclined to think the latter, for seventy years ago women prided themselves upon being Christianlike and devout, and would not have disobeyed the director of their conscience in so grave and important a matter.

What is undeniable is, that if in the present day any lady were to present herself in the garb of the lady of the portrait there would be a scandal, for from her waist (which began at her arm-pits) upwards she was only veiled by light folds of diaphanous gauze, which marked out, rather than covered, two mountains of snow, between which meandered a thread of pearls. With further lack of modesty she stretched out two rounded arms worthy of Juno, ending in finely-moulded hands . . . when I say *hands* I am not exact, for, strictly speaking, only one hand could be seen, and that held a richly embroidered handkerchief.

Even to-day I am astonished at the startling effect which the contemplation of that miniature produced upon me, and how I remained in ecstasy, scarcely breathing, devouring the portrait with my eyes. I had already seen here and there prints representing beautiful women: it often happened that in the illustrated papers, in the mythological engravings of our dining-room, or in a shop-window a beautiful face or a harmonious and graceful figure attracted my precociously artistic gaze; but the miniature encountered in my aunt's drawer, apart from its great beauty, appeared to me as if animated by a subtle and vital breath; you could see it was not the caprice of a painter, but the image of a real and actual person of flesh and blood. The warm and rich tone of the tints made you surmise that the blood was tepid beneath that mother-of-pearl skin. The lips were slightly parted to disclose the enamelled teeth; and to complete the illusion there ran round the frame a border of natural hair, chestnut in colour, wavy and silky, which had grown on the temples of the original.

As I have said, it was more than a copy, it was the reflection of a living person from whom I was only separated by a wall of glass. . . . I seized it, breathed upon it, and it seemed to me that the warmth of the mysterious deity communicated itself to my lips and circulated through my veins. At this moment I heard footsteps in the corridor. It was my aunt returning from her prayers. I heard her asthmatic cough and the dragging of her gouty feet. I had only just time to put the miniature into the

drawer, shut it, and approach the window, adopting an innocent and indifferent attitude.

My aunt entered noisily, for the cold of the church had exasperated her catarrh, now chronic. Upon seeing me, her wrinkled little eyes brightened, and giving me a friendly tap with her withered hand, she asked me if I had been turning over her drawers as usual.

Then, with a chuckle: "Wait a bit, wait a bit," she added, "I have something for you, something you will like."

And she pulled out of her vast pocket a paper bag, and out of the bag three or four gum lozenges, sticking together in a cake, which gave me a feeling of nausea.

My aunt's appearance did not invite one to open one's mouth and devour these sweets: the course of years, her loss of teeth, her eyes dimmed to an unusual degree, the sprouting of a moustache or bristles on her sunken-in mouth, which was three inches wide, dull grey locks fluttering above her sallow temples, a neck flaccid and livid as the crest of the turkey when in a good temper. . . . In short, I did not take the lozenges. Ugh! A feeling of indignation, a manly protest rose in me, and I said forcibly:

"I don't want it, I don't want it."

"You don't want it? What a wonder! You who are greedier than a cat!"

"I am not a little boy," I exclaimed, drawing myself up, and standing on tip-toes; "I don't care for sweets."

My aunt looked at me half good-humouredly and half ironically, and at last, giving way to the feeling of amusement I caused her, burst out laughing, by which she disfigured herself, and exposed the horrible anatomy of her jaws. She laughed so heartily that her chin and nose met, hiding her lips, and emphasising two wrinkles, or rather two deep furrows, and more than a dozen lines on her cheeks and eyelids; at the same time her head and body shook with the laughter, until at last her cough began to interrupt the bursts, and between laughing and coughing the old lady involuntarily spluttered all over my face. . . . Humiliated, and full of disgust, I escaped rapidly thence to my mother's room, where I washed myself with soap and water, and began to muse on the lady of the portrait.

And from that day and hour I could not keep my thoughts from her. As soon as my aunt went out, to slip into the room, open the drawer, bring out the miniature, and lose myself in contemplation, was the work of a minute. By dint of looking at it, I fancied that her languishing eyes, through the voluptuous veiling of her eyelashes, were fixed in mine, and that her white bosom heaved. I became ashamed to kiss her, imagining she would be annoyed at my audacity, and only pressed her to my heart or held her

against my cheek. All my actions and thoughts referred to the lady; I behaved towards her with the most extraordinary refinement and super-delicacy.

Before entering my aunt's room and opening the longed-for drawer, I washed, combed my hair, and tidied myself, as I have seen since is usually done before repairing to a love appointment. I often happened to meet in the street other boys of my age, very proud of their slip of a sweetheart, who would exultingly show me love-letters, photographs, and flowers, and who asked me if I hadn't a sweetheart with whom to correspond. A feeling of inexplicable bashfulness tied my tongue, and I only replied with an enigmatic and haughty smile. And when they questioned me as to what I thought of the beauty of their little maidens, I would shrug my shoulders and disdainfully call them *ugly mugs*. One Sunday I went to play in the house of some little girl-cousins, really very pretty, and the elder of whom was not yet fifteen.

We were amusing ourselves looking into a stereoscope, when suddenly one of the little girls, the youngest, who counted twelve summers at most, secretly seized my hand, and in some confusion and blushing as red as a brazier, whispered in my ear: "Take this." At the same time I felt in the palm of my hand something soft and fresh, and saw that it was a rosebud with its green foliage.

The little girl ran away smiling and casting a side-glance at me; but I, with a Puritanism worthy of Joseph, cried out in my turn: "Take this!" And I threw the rosebud at her nose, a rebuff which made her pettish with me the whole afternoon, and which she has not pardoned me even now, though she is married and has three children.

The two or three hours which my aunt spent morning and evening together at church being too short for my admiration of the entrancing portrait, I resolved at last to keep the miniature in my pocket, and went about all day hiding myself from people just as if I had committed a crime. I fancied that the portrait from the depth of its prison of cloth could see all my actions, and I arrived at such a ridiculous extremity, that if I wanted to scratch myself, pull up my sock, or do anything else not in keeping with the idealism of my chaste love, I first drew out the miniature, put it in a safe place, and then considered myself free to do whatever I wanted.

In fact, since I had accomplished the theft, there was no limit to my vagaries; at night I hid it under the pillow, and slept in an attitude of defence; the portrait remained near the wall, I outside, and I awoke a thousand times, fearing somebody would come to bereave me of my treasure. At last I drew it from beneath the pillow and slipped it between my night-shirt and left breast, on which the following day could be seen the imprint of the chasing of the frame.

The contact of the dear miniature gave me delicious dreams. The lady of the portrait, not in effigy, but in her natural size and proportions, alive, graceful, affable, beautiful, would come towards me to conduct me to her palace by a rapid and flying train. With sweet authority she would make me sit on a stool at her feet, and would pass her beautifully moulded hand over my head, caressing my brow, my eyes, and loose curls. I read to her out of a big missal, or played the lute, and she deigned to smile, thanking me for the pleasure which my reading and songs gave her. At last romantic reminiscences overflowed in my brain, and sometimes I was a page, and sometimes a troubadour. With all these fanciful ideas, the fact is, that I began to grow thin quite perceptibly, which was observed with great disquietude by my parents and my aunt.

"In this dangerous and critical age of development, everything is alarming," said my father, who used to read books of medicine, and anxiously studied my dark eyelids, my dull eyes, my contracted and pale lips, and above all, the complete lack of appetite which had taken possession of me.

"Play, boy, eat, boy," he would say to me, and I replied to him dejectedly: "I don't feel inclined."

They began to talk of distractions, offered to take me to the theatre; stopped my studies, and gave me foaming new milk to drink. Afterwards they poured cold water over my head and back to fortify my nerves; and I noticed that my father at table or in the morning when I went to his bedroom to bid him good-morning, would gaze at me fixedly for some little time, and would sometimes pass his hand down my spine, feeling the vertebræ. I hypocritically lowered my eyes, resolved to die rather than confess my crime.

As soon as I was free from the affectionate solicitude of my family, I found myself alone with my lady of the portrait. At last, to get nearer to her, I thought I would do away with the cold crystal. I trembled upon putting this into execution; but at last my love prevailed over the vague fear with which such a profanation filled me, and with skilful cunning I succeeded in pulling away the glass and exposing the ivory plate. As I pressed my lips to the painting and could scent the slight fragrance of the border of hair, I imagined to myself even more realistically that it was a living person whom I was grasping with my trembling hands. A feeling of faintness overpowered me, and I fell unconscious on the sofa, tightly holding the miniature.

When I came to my senses I saw my father, my mother, and my aunt, all bending anxiously over me; I read their alarm in their faces: my father was feeling my pulse, shaking his head, and murmuring: "His pulse is nothing but a flutter, you can scarcely feel it."

My aunt, with her claw-like fingers, was trying to take the portrait from me, and I was mechanically hiding it and grasping it more firmly.

"But, my dear boy. . . . Let go, you are spoiling it!" she exclaimed. "Don't you see you are smudging it? I am not scolding you, my dear . . . I will show it to you as often as you like, but don't destroy it; let go, you are injuring it."

"Let him have it," begged my mother, "the boy is not well."

"Of all things to ask!" replied the old maid. "Let him have it! And who will paint another like this . . . or make me as I was then? To-day nobody paints miniatures . . . it is a thing of the past, and I also am a thing of the past, and I am not what is represented there!"

My eyes dilated with horror; my fingers released their hold on the picture. I don't know how I was able to articulate:

"You . . . the portrait . . . is you . . .?"

"Don't you think I am as pretty now, boy? Bah! one is better-looking at twenty-three than at . . . than at . . . I don't know what, for I have forgotten how old I am!" My head drooped and I almost fainted again; anyway, my father lifted me in his arms on to the bed, and made me swallow some tablespoonfuls of port.

I recovered very quickly, and never wished to enter my aunt's room again.

"CLARÍN"
(LEOPOLDO ALÁS)
1852–1905

DOCTOR PERTINAX

ST. PETER was polishing the large knocker of the Gate of Heaven, leaving it as bright as the sun—which is not to be wondered at since the knocker St. Peter was cleaning *is* the sun we see appearing every morning in the east.

The holy porter, merrier than his colleagues at Madrid, was humming some little air not unlike *Ça ira* of the French.

"Hola! You get up very early," said he, bending his head and staring at a person who had stopped before the threshold of the gate.

The unknown did not reply, but bit his lips, which were thin, pale, and dry.

"No doubt," continued St. Peter, "you are the savant who was dying last night? . . . What a night you made me pass, friend! . . . I never closed my eyes once, thinking you might be likely to knock; my last orders were not to let you wait a moment, a piece of respect paid to your sort in heaven. Well, welcome, and come in; I can't leave the gate. Go through, and then straight on. . . . There is no entresol."

The stranger did not stir from the threshold, but fixed his little blue eyes on the venerable bald head of St. Peter, who had turned his back to go on rubbing up the sun.

The new-comer was thin, short, and sallow, with somewhat feminine movements, neat in his attire, and without a hair on his face. He wore his shroud elegantly and nicely adjusted, and he measured his gestures with academic severity.

After gazing for some time at St. Peter working, he wheeled round and was about to return on the journey he had come he knew not how; but he found he was standing above a gloomy abyss, in which the darkness almost seemed palpable, and a horrisonous tempest was roaring with flashes of livid light at intervals like lightning. There was not a trace of any stairs, and the machine by which he dimly remembered he had mounted was not in sight either.

"Sir," exclaimed he, in a vibrating and acrid voice; "may I

know what this means? Where am I? Why was I brought here? "

" Ah, you haven't gone yet; I am very glad, for I had forgotten something." And pulling his memorandum-book out of his pocket, the saint moistened the point of the pencil between his lips and asked:

" Your name? "

" I am Doctor Pertinax, author of the book stereotyped in its twentieth edition, called *Philosophia Ultima*. . . ."

St. Peter was not a quick writer, and of all this had only put down Pertinax. . . .

" Well, Pertinax of what? "

" Of what? Oh, I see, you mean from where? just as they say: Thales of Miletus, Parmenides of Elea——"

" Exactly, Quixote of la Mancha. . . ."

" Write down, Pertinax of Torrelodones. And now, may I know what this farce means? "

" This farce? "

" Yes, sir. I am the victim of a farce, this is a comedy: my enemies, my colleagues, with the help of subtle artifices and theatrical machinery, exalting my mind with some beverage, have doubtless prepared all this. But the deception is useless. My power of reasoning is above all these appearances, and protests with a mighty voice against this low trickery; neither masks nor limelights are of any avail, for I am not taken in by such palpable effrontery, and I say what I always said, and which is enframed on page 315 of my *Philosophia Ultima*, note *b*. of the sub-note Alpha, *i.e.* that after death the deception of appearances will not exist, and there will no longer be any desire for life, *nolite vivere*, which is only a chain of shadows linked with desires, etc., etc. . . . Therefore, one of the two: either I have died, or I have not died; if I have died, it cannot possibly be I as I was when alive half an hour ago, and all that I see around me, as it can only be a representation, is not, for I am not; but if I have not died, and am myself, what I was and am, it is clear that although what I see around me exists in me by representation, it is not what my enemies wish me to believe, but an unworthy farce designed to frighten me; but 'tis in vain, for . . ."

And the philosopher swore like a coal-heaver. And the swearing was not the worst, for he lifted up his voice towards Heaven, the inhabitants of which were beginning to awake at the noise, while some of the blest were already descending by the staircase of clouds, tinged some as with woad, others with a sea-blue.

Meanwhile St. Peter held his sides with both hands to keep from bursting into the laughter with which he was nearly choking. Pertinax became more irritated at the saint's laughter, and the latter had to stop to try and pacify him by the following words:

" My dear sir, farces are of no avail here, nor is it a question of deceiving you, but of bringing you to Heaven, which it appears you have merited for some good works of which I am ignorant; in any case, calm yourself and go up, for the inhabitants above are already astir, and you will find somebody who will conduct you to where all will be explained to your taste, so that not a shadow of doubt will remain, for doubts all disappear in this region, where the dullest thing is the sun which I am polishing."

" I did not say *you* are deceiving me, for you seem an honest man; the tricksters are others, and you only an instrument, unconscious of what you are doing."

" I am St. Peter. . . ."

" They have persuaded you that you are; but there's no proof that you are."

" Dear sir, I have been porter here for more than eighteen hundred years——"

" Apprehension, preconception——"

" Preconception fiddlesticks! " cried the saint, now somewhat angry; " I am St. Peter, and you are a savant, and like all that come to us, an ignorant fool, with more than one bee in your bonnet. . . ."

The gateway was now crowded with angels and cherubim, saints, male and female, and a number of the blest, who all formed a circle round the stranger and smilingly surveyed him.

. . . . . .

From amongst them there stepped forth St. Job. " I think," said he, " that this gentleman would be convinced that he had lived in error if he could see the Universe as it actually is. Why not appoint a commission from amongst us to accompany Doctor Pertinax and show him the construction of the immense piece of architecture as Lope de Vega says, whom I am sorry not to see among us? "

Great was the respect for St. Job, and they immediately proceeded to a nominal vote, which took up a good deal of time, as more than half the martyrology had repaired to the gate. The following were by the results appointed members of the commission: St. Job, by acclamation; Diogenes, by a majority; and St. Thomas the Apostle, by a majority. St. Thomas of Aquinas and Duns Scotus had votes.

Doctor Pertinax gave way to the supplication of the commission, and consented to survey all the machinery and magic with which they might deceive his eyes, said he, but not his mind.

" My dear fellow, don't be downhearted," said St. Thomas, as he sewed some wings on to the Doctor's shoulder-blades. " Look at me, I was an unbeliever, and . . ."

" Sir," replied Pertinax, " you lived in very different times, the

world was then in its theological age as Comte said, and I have passed through all those ages and have lived side by side with the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Philosophia Ultima*; so that I believe in nothing, not even in the mother who bore me; I only believe in this, inasmuch as I know that I am, I am conscious, but without falling into the preconception of confounding representation with essence, which is unattainable, that is to say, excepting the being conscious, putting aside all that is not myself (and all being in myself) I *know*, by knowing that everything is represented (and I as everything else) by simply appearing to be what it is, and the reality of which is only investigated by another volitive and effective representation, a harmful representation, being irrational and the original sin of the Fall; therefore, this apparent desire undone, nothing remains to explore, since not even the will for knowledge remains."

Only St. Job heard the last word of this discourse, and, scratching his bald crown with his potsherd, he replied:

"The truth is, you savants are the very devil for talking nonsense, and don't be offended, but those things, whether in your head or imagination, as you please, will give you warm work to see them in reality as they are."

"Forward! forward!" shouted Diogenes at this moment; "the sophists denied me motion, and you know how I proved it; forward!"

And they began their flight through boundless space. Boundless? Pertinax thought it so, and said:

"Do you expect to show me all the Universe?"

"Certainly," replied St. Thomas.

"But since the Universe—seemingly, of course—is infinite . . . how can you conceive the limit of space?"

"Conceive it, with difficulty; but see it, easily. Aristoteles sees it every day, for he takes the most terrible walks with his disciples, and certainly he complained that the space for walking ended before the disputes of his peripatetics."

"But how can space have an end? If there is a limit, it will have to be nothing; but as nothing does not exist, it cannot form a boundary; for a boundary is something, and something apart from what is bounded."

St. Job, who was already growing impatient, cut him short:

"Enough, enough of conversation! but you had better bend your head so as not to knock it, for we have arrived at that limit of space which cannot be conceived, and if you take a step more, you will break your head against that nothing you are denying."

And effectually; Pertinax saw there was nothing more beyond; wished to feel it, and bumped his head.

" But this can't be! " he exclaimed, while St. Thomas applied to the bump one of those pieces of money which pagans take with them on their journey to the other world.

There was no help for it, they had to turn back, the Universe had come to an end. But ended or not, how beautiful shone the firmament with its millions and millions of stars!

" What is that dazzling light shining above there, higher than all the constellations? Is it some nebula unknown to the astronomers of the earth? "

" A pretty nebula! " replied St. Thomas! " that is the celestial Jerusalem, from which we have just descended, and what is shining so are the diamond walls round the city of God."

" So that those marvels related by Chateaubriand, and which I thought unworthy of a serious man—? "

" Are perfectly true, my friend. And now let us go and rest on that star passing below there, for i' faith I am tired of so much going backwards and forwards."

" Gentlemen, I am not presentable," said Pertinax; " I have not yet doffed my shroud, and the inhabitants of this star will laugh at such indecorous garb. . . ."

The three Ciceroni of Heaven all burst out laughing together. Diogenes was the first to exclaim:

" Though I should lend you my lantern, you would not meet a living soul in that star, nor in any other star."

" Of course," added Job, very seriously, " there are no inhabitants except on the Earth; don't talk such nonsense."

" This I cannot believe! "

" Well, let us go and show him," said St. Thomas, who was already growing angry. And they journeyed from star to star, and in a few minutes had traversed all the Milky Way and the most distant starry systems. Nothing, not a sign of life. They did not even encounter a flea, for all the numerous globes they surveyed. Pertinax was horrified.

" This is the Creation! " he exclaimed; " what solitude! Come, show me the Earth; I want to see that privileged region; by what I conjecture, all modern cosmography is a lie, the Earth is still, and the centre of all the celestial vault; and round her revolve the suns and planets, and she is the largest of all the spheres——"

" Not at all," replied St. Thomas; " astronomy is not mistaken; the earth revolves round the sun, and you will soon see how insignificant she appears. Let us see if we can find her amongst all that crowd of stars. *You* look for her, St. Job; *you* have plenty of patience."

" I will! " exclaimed the Saint of the potsherd, as he hooked his spectacles round his ears.

" It is like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay! . . . I see

her! there she goes! look! look how small! she looks like a microbe! "

Pertinax looked at the Earth and sighed.

" And are there no inhabitants except on that mote? "

" Nowhere else."

" And the rest of the Universe is empty? "

" Empty."

" Then of what use are such millions and millions of stars? "

" As lamps. They are the public illumination of the Earth. And they are also useful for singing praises to the Almighty. And they serve as eke-outs in poetry, and you can't deny they are very pretty."

" But all empty? "

" Every one! "

Pertinax remained in the air for a good time sad and thoughtful. He felt ill. The edifice of his *Philosophia Ultima* was threatening ruin. Upon seeing that the Universe was so different from what reason demanded, he began to believe in the Universe. That brusque lesson of reality was the rude and cold contact with material which his spirit needed in order to believe. " It is all so badly arranged, but perhaps it is true! " thus thought the philosopher. Suddenly he turned to his companions, and asked them, " Does Hell exist? "

The three sighed, made gestures of compassion, and replied:

" Yes, it exists."

" And condemnation is eternal? "

" Eternal."

" A solemn injustice? "

" A terrible reality! " replied the three in chorus.

Pertinax wiped his brow with his shroud. He was perspiring philosophy. He began to believe that he was in the other world. The injustice of everything convinced him. " Then the cosmogony and the theogony of my infancy was the truth? "

" Yes; the first and only philosophy."

" Then I am not dreaming? "

" No."

" Confession! confession! " groaned the philosopher; and he swooned into the arms of Diogenes.

. . . . . .

When he awoke, he found himself in his bed. His old servant and the priest were by his side.

" Here is the confessor, sir, for whom you asked . . . "

Pertinax sat up, stretched out both his hands, and looking at the confessor with frightened eyes, cried:

" I say and repeat, that all is pure representation, and that I am the victim of an unworthy farce." And he expired really.

"CLARÍN"
(LEOPOLDO ALÁS)

MY BURIAL
THE DISCOURSE OF A MADMAN

One night I played chess longer than prudence dictates, with my friend Roque Tuyo in the café San Benito. When I started home all the street lamps were out except the guide lights. It was spring-time, approaching June. The weather was warm, and the mind rather than the body was refreshed by the pleasant splash of the water as it rushed freely from the hydrants, turning the pavements into rivers. I arrived home with my feet soaking wet. My head was like a furnace, and wet feet might do me much harm; I might go mad, for instance. What with chess and the damp I was suffering greatly. To begin with, the policemen who slept at the corner with folded arms, leaning against the coach-house door of some mansion, seemed to me like *black castles*. So much so, that on passing near San Ginés one of the policemen stepped off the pavement to let me pass, and I, instead of saying " thank you," exclaimed, " I castle the king," and walked on. On reaching my house I saw that the balcony of my room was open and from it came a glare as of wax torches. I rapped on the door the regulation three knocks. A harsh voice, as though its owner was half asleep, asked, " Who is it? " " Black King! " I answered, but no one opened. " Check! " I cried three times in one minute, but nobody opened. I called to the night watchman, who was coming from pavement to pavement opening doors and leaving his squares at every move. " Here! " I said, when I could have taken him with my pawn. " Not even if you're a knight; what a way of taking you have! " " It is you who are the horse and the sweep, you ought to be ashamed. . . . And don't make so much noise, for some one is dead on the third floor and is lying in state." " A victim of the damp! " said I compassionately, with my own boots full of water.

" Yes, sir, a victim of the damp; they say he died in a drinking bout; he had all the vices, but gave good tips; well, his widow will get over it, for she is still young and good-looking, and everything

can now be done openly and according to the law instead of in the dark." "And what do you know about it, gossip?" "Don't you call people names, young man; I am the watchman and so far have kept as silent as the night, but now the dog is dead. . . . I will say what I like!" shouted that Pyrenean bear, and he lurched off to open another door. A servant came down to let me in. It was Perico, my faithful Perico. "What a time you have been, you idiot!" "Hush! Do not shout, the master is dead." "Whose master?" "My master." "What from?" "He had a stroke, I think. He got his feet wet after playing chess with Sr. Roque . . . and naturally, it happened as Don Clemente told the mistress, 'Don't worry, your brute of a husband will remove himself some day.'" "Look here, if your master is dead, who am I?" "Well, you're the man sent to lay him out, as Don Clemente said he would send some one at this hour, so as not to attract attention. . . . Come up, come up." I reached my room. In the middle of the floor there was a bed surrounded by large candles, as are the coffins of the guests in *Lucrezia Borgia*. The balcony window was open. Stretched out on the bed was a corpse. I looked. Yes, it was I. I was wearing a shirt, no pants, and a pair of socks. I started to dress myself—to lay myself out, I mean. I took out my frock-coat, the one I wore for the first time at the meeting of the Price Club, when Martos made that remark about "traitors like Sagasta," and the late Mata spoke of the tub of the Danaides! I never knew what tub that was. Well, I wanted to change my socks, because the damp was very annoying, and also because I wanted to be clean for the cemetery. Impossible! They had stuck to the skin. Those socks were like the garment of I don't remember whom, but instead of burning, they wetted. That sensation of dampness was sometimes cold and sometimes hot. At times I thought my feet were on my neck, and my ears were setting me on fire. . . . Lastly I dressed in mourning as became a dead man attending the funeral of his best friend. One of the wax candles bent over and drops of burning liquid began to fall on my nose. Perico, who was there alone, because the man who laid me out had disappeared, Perico was asleep on a chair near by. He woke up and saw the havoc the wax was making on my face; he attempted to straighten the candle without getting up, but his hand could not reach the candlestick . . . and yawning, he went off to sleep again peacefully. The cat came in, jumped on my bed and curling himself up went to sleep on my feet. So we passed the night.

At dawn the cold in my feet became more intense. I dreamt that one of them was the Mississippi and the other a very large river in North Asia, but I could not remember its name. What torment I suffered trying to remember the name of that foot of mine! When

daylight came through the crevices, to mingle with the yellow light of the candles, Perico woke up; he opened his mouth, yawned loudly, and bringing out a big green purse, began to count out money on the death-bed. A large black fly alighted on my nose still covered with wax. Perico looked absent-mindedly at the fly while he counted on his fingers, but made no move to free me from the annoyance. My wife came into the room about seven o'clock. She had already put on black clothes, just as actors put on mourning in readiness for something sad to happen in the third act. Her face was pale, repentant, but the expression of pain seemed to be more a sign of bad temper than anything else. Those wrinkles and contortions of pain seemed tied by an invisible cord. And such in fact was the case! The will, dominating the muscles, held them drawn by force. . . . In the presence of my wife I felt an extraordinary faculty of my consciousness as a dead man; my thoughts communicated direct with external thoughts; through the body I saw the innermost soul. I had not noticed this miraculous faculty before, as Perico was my only companion, and Perico had no thoughts in which I could read anything. "Go away," said my wife to the servant; and kneeling down at my feet remained alone with me. Her face cleared suddenly; the signs of the vigil remained, but not of the pain. And she prayed mentally after this style: "Our Father (what a time the other is taking!) which art in Heaven (Is there another life and can *he* see me from up there?), hallowed (I will buy cheap mourning as I don't want to spend much on black clothes) be Thy name (The funeral is going to cost me a lot unless his friends undertake it), Thy kingdom come (And if I marry the other, I will do as I like without interference from any one) on earth as in Heaven (I wonder if this creature is in Purgatory?) . . ."

At eight o'clock another personage arrived, Clemente Cerrojos, member of our political committee for the district of Latina. Cerrojos had been my friend politically and privately, although I did not know he was so interested in my affairs as he was. He used to play chess. but finding that he cheated, and moved the pieces surreptitiously, I broke off with him, as a player, and sought a nobler adversary in the café. Clemente remained in my house every evening as company for my wife. He was dressed in that shopkeeper style which consists of a large ample frock-coat of smooth shiny black cloth, and trousers, waistcoat, and tie of the same colour. Clemente Cerrojos squinted with the right eye; the pupil of that eye glistened motionless, without expression, just like a stud one sees on trunks and doors. My wife did not raise her head. Cerrojos sat down on the death-bed, making it creak from head to foot. For five minutes there was silence. But, oh! I saw their thoughts. My wife suddenly thought how horrible it would

be to kiss that man or be kissed by him there, before my supposed corpse. Cerrojos thought the same. I could not move; but he imagined I had. He leant over and looked into my eyes, open like frameless windows, and started back. Then he came and closed the loopholes through which my poor corpse was menacing him. People began to arrive.

They carried the coffin to the porch and there left me near the door, one leaf of which was closed. Part of the coffin, the foot, became wet with the fine rain that was falling; always the damp! I saw, that is, I felt by the supernatural means at my disposal, that the mourners were descending. They filled the porch, which was large. All were dressed in black; some wore frock-coats of the previous century. The whole of the district committee was there and many of the rank and file of the party, those who only appear when the hat is passed round for any calamity to some political friend and the subscription lists are published. Among them I saw my barman, who was anxious to devote a tear and a melancholy thought to the memory of the deceased; but his frock-coat was giving him trouble, its skirts got between his legs, and as to his tie it was tickling and choking him; and so he did not think of me for a single moment. The procession lined up. They put me in the hearse and the people started getting into the carriages. There were two sections, one for the family, which, as I had no relatives, was represented by my friends, those to whom my house was open; Clemente Cerrojos presided, on his right was Roque Tuyo, on his left my landlord, who used to come into the house to see if we ill-treated his property. The other section was political. In the centre was Mateo Gomez, an upright, consistent man, who professed this dogma: "My friends are the members of my party." And he swore that Madoz had robbed him of that famous phrase: "I will follow my party even in its errors." One of the titles to glory of Don Mateo was that not a single political friend had died without his attendance at the funeral. Don Mateo esteemed me, but to tell the truth, whilst he walked along to my final abode—an expression he thought of using in the speech it was his turn to make—he kept changing from one colour to another; something mysterious was happening in his throat, and inwardly he was cursing the day I was born and still more the day I died. I was penetrating Don Mateo's thoughts from my hearse, thanks to the double sight already mentioned. The good patrician had, in fact, learnt his speech by heart: it was more or less the funeral oration, as published in the papers, of a certain politician much more famous than myself, delivered by a celebrated orator of our party. But the good Gomez had forgotten more, much more than half the flowery harangue, and hence the difficulties. Whilst his companions in the procession talked with great peace of mind about the vicissitudes of

the grain market, to which both devoted their time, Don Mateo endeavoured in vain to rebuild the ruined structure of his prepared speech. Finally, he saw it would be necessary to improvise, since he could not rely on his memory. " The best way for me to get ideas," thought he, " would be to feel truly sorry with all my heart at the death of Ronzuelos " (my name). And he endeavoured to feel sad, but in vain; in spite of his compunctious face, he did not care a fig for the death of Ronzuelos (Don Agapito), that is, my death.

" It is a loss, a real loss," he said aloud so that the others could help him to lament my disappearance from the great book of the living, as Perez Escrich says. " A great loss! " he repeated.

" Yes, but the grain was damaged, and it was lucky he could sell it in that condition," replied one of the people in that section.

" What do you mean by selling? Ronzuelos was incapable . . . he was most upright . . . yes, most upright."

" But, man, who mentioned Ronzuelos? We are talking of the grain sold by Perez Pinto. . . ."

" Well I am talking of the deceased."

" Ah, yes. He was a character."

" Just so, a character, and that is what we want in this country, without——"

" Without *characters*," added another, finishing the phrase and accenting the word on the penultimate syllable.

. . . . . .

Don Mateo doubted whether *characters* could be so accented or not, but after that he knew what to expect.

We reached the cemetery. Then the mourners, for the first time, remembered me. Round the coffin stood the party which Don Mateo followed even in its errors. There was a silence which I will not call solemn, because it was not. All present awaited with spiteful curiosity the speech Gomez was to make. " He is a fool, you will see," said some. " He cannot speak, but he is a strong man." " And that is what we need," interrupted another. " Fewer words and more deeds is what the country wants."

" Yes! . . . Yes! . . . Yes! . . ." said many. " Y-e-e-s! . . ." repeated the echo in the distance.

" Gentlemen," exclaimed Don Mateo, after coughing twice and unbuttoning and buttoning a glove. " Gentlemen, another champion has fallen, struck as though by lightning (he did not know I had been killed by the damp) in the struggle of progress with obscurantism. Model of citizens, of husbands, and of liberals, among his virtues shone like a star the great virtue of consistency. Upright as few are, his heart was an open book. Model of citizens, of husbands, and of liberals . . ." Don Mateo suddenly remem-

bered he had said this already; he became agitated, felt all thought and memory sink in a hole darker than the tomb which was to swallow me, and in that instant envied me; he would have changed places with the corpse. The cemetery began to revolve, the mausoleums danced and the earth sank. I, lying in state, in view of all, had to make a great effort to keep from laughing and preserve the gravity proper to the corpse in such a funereal ceremony. Once more reigned the silence of the tombs. Don Mateo sought the rebel word, the people kept silent, with a silence that equalled a storm of hisses; the only sounds were the spluttering of the candles and the rustling of the wind in the cypress trees. Don Mateo, while searching for the thread, cursed his luck, cursed the deceased, the party, and the rotten habit of speaking, which leads to nothing, for the country wants deeds. "Of what use to me is my life of sacrifice on the altars of liberty?" thought he; "because I am no Cicero, I am now ridiculous in the eyes of many less consistent and less patriotic than myself." At last he succeeded in finding what he called the thread of his discourse, and continued: "Ah, gentlemen, Ronzuelos, Agapito Ronzuelos was a martyr to the idea (to the damp, my dear sir, to the damp), to the holy idea, to the pure idea, to the idea of progress, of undefined progress! He was not a wordy man—I mean, he was not an orator, for in this unhappy country we have too many orators, we need character, deeds, and great consistency." There was a murmur of approval and Don Mateo took advantage of it to finish his speech. The cortège broke up. Then they talked of me a little, in order to criticise the funeral oration of the president of the committee.

"The truth is," said one, striking a match on the lid of my coffin, "the fact is that Don Mateo has said nothing but commonplaces."

"Obviously, man," said another, "the usual thing; besides, poor Ronzuelos was a good fellow and nothing more. Fancy him having character!"

"Or consistency."

"He was a great chess player, nothing more."

"On that point much could be said," remarked a third. "He won because he cheated. He kept the chessmen in his pocket."

The one who said this was Roque Tuyo, my rival, the scoundrel who castled after moving his king!

I could not restrain myself. "You lie!" I shouted, jumping from the coffin. But I saw no one; they had all disappeared. Night was coming on; the moon was rising behind the walls of the cemetery. The cypress trees bent their pointed tops in melancholy sway, the wind moaned through the branches, as the people did when Don Mateo stopped a while ago. A grave-digger arrived.

" What are you doing there? " he asked me, rather frightened. " I am the deceased," I replied. " Yes, the deceased, do not be afraid. Listen! I will rent this niche; I will pay to live in it more than if a dead man occupied it. I do not want to return to the city of the living. . . . My wife, Perico, Clemente, the party, Don Mateo . . . and especially Roque Tuyo, disgust me." The grave-digger said Amen! to it all. It was settled that the cemetery should be my inn, that niche my bedroom. But, ah! the grave-digger was a man also. He sold me. The following day they came to fetch me. Clemente, Perico, my wife, and a commission from the bosom of my party, with Don Mateo at its head or at its heels. I resisted to the best of my ability, defending myself with a thigh-bone; but numbers conquered; they seized me, dressed me in the clothes of a white pawn, stood me in on a black check, and here I am, where no one can move me, threatened by a knight that does not take me and only bores holes in me with his lance. And my feet are soaked, as though I were rice.

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS

B. 1853

THE BIRD IN THE SNOW

He was born blind. They taught him the only thing the blind usually learn, music; and in this art he excelled. His mother had died a few years after his birth; his father, a musician in a regimental band, only a year ago. He had a brother in America who never wrote home: nevertheless, he heard indirectly that he was married, had two children, and was in a good position. The father, indignant at the ingratitude of his son, would not hear his name mentioned; but the blind boy still had a great affection for him. He could not forget that this brother, older than himself, had helped him in his childhood, had defended him against the attacks of big boys, and had always spoken to him kindly. The voice of Santiago, as he came to his room in the morning, saying, "Hello, Juanito! Jump up, man, you sleep too long," rang in his ear more pleasantly than the notes of the piano and the strings of the violin. How could such a good heart have turned hard? Juan could not believe it, and tried to find a million excuses for him. At times he blamed the post; at others he imagined that his brother did not want to write until he could send a large sum of money; or again, he imagined that he would give them a surprise some day by appearing loaded with millions at the modest flat they occupied; but none of these thoughts he ventured to tell his father. Only when the latter, in exasperation, declaimed bitterly against his absent son, would he venture to say, "Do not despair, father, Santiago is good; my heart tells me that he will write one of these days."

His father died without ever seeing a letter from his elder son, attended by a priest, who exhorted him, and the poor blind son who clutched his hand convulsively as though trying by force to keep him in this world. When they wanted to carry the body from the house Juan fought frantically, terribly, with the undertakers. Finally he was left alone; but what a loneliness! Without father, mother, relations, or friends: he was even without the sun, the friend of all created beings. For two days he remained in his room, walking up and down like a caged wolf, without touching food.

The servant, with the help of a kindly neighbour, finally succeeded in preventing the suicide. He consented to eat again, and thenceforth passed his time in prayer or playing the piano.

His father, some time before his death, had obtained for him the position of organist at a church in Madrid, for which he was paid three pesetas a day. It was not sufficient, naturally, to keep up a house, however modest; and so, after a fortnight, our blind friend sold, for very little, the modest furniture of his home, dismissed the servant, and went into lodgings, paying two pesetas. The money left over was sufficient for his other wants. For some months he lived without going out except to his work; from the house to the church, and from the church to the house. Sorrow so overwhelmed him that he hardly opened his lips. He spent his time composing a great Requiem Mass which he thought the parish priest would let him play for the soul of his dead father. And although it cannot be said that he had all five senses in his work, since one was wanting, we can say that he devoted his life and soul to it.

A change of Government surprised him before he had finished it. I do not know whether the Radicals came in, or the Conservatives, or the Constitutionalists; but some one new came in. Juan only heard of it too late and then to his cost. The new cabinet, after a few days, decided that Juan as an organist was dangerous to the public safety, and that from high up in the choir-loft, at Vespers and High Mass, roaring and humming on all organ stops, he was making a really scandalous opposition to it. As the new ministry was not disposed, so it had affirmed in congress, through one of its most prominent members, " to tolerate the dictation of any one," they at once proceeded with commendable energy to dismiss Juan and find a substitute who in his musical evolutions offered more guarantees and was more in favour of the institutions. When they gave him notice, our blind friend did not experience any greater emotion than surprise; in his heart he was almost glad, as it left him more spare time to finish his Mass. He only realised his position when at the end of the month the landlady came to his room and asked for money. He had not got it, because he no longer earned it at the church; he had to pawn his father's watch to pay her. Then he was quite happy and went on working without worrying about the future. But again the landlady came for money, and again he had to pawn something from his very meagre paternal inheritance; it was a diamond ring. In the end he had nothing left to pawn. Then, in consideration for his affliction, they kept him a few days out of courtesy, but very few, and then they turned him into the street, satisfied with themselves for letting him take his trunk and clothes, the value of which would have paid for the few reales still owing.

He went to another house but could not hire a piano, and this

caused him immense sorrow; he would be unable to finish his Mass. But for some time he went to the house of a friendly grocer and played the piano occasionally. Before long, however, he noticed they were less friendly every time he went there and he gave up his visits.

They soon turned him out of the new house, but this time keeping his trunk. Then began for the blind man a period of such misery and anguish that few can have any idea of the sorrows, or rather of the martyrdom, which fate inflicted on him. Without friends, without clothes, without money, there is no doubt that one is very badly off in this world; but if to this we add blindness and consequently absolute helplessness we can hardly see the limit of his suffering and misery. From inn to inn, thrown out of each soon after entering, going to bed in order that his only shirt could be washed, his boots split, his trousers frayed, his hair uncut, and his face unshaved, Juan wandered round Madrid for I do not know how long. He tried to obtain through an innkeeper, more compassionate than the rest, the post of pianist in a café, and in the end they gave it to him, but he was dismissed in a few days. Juan's music did not please the habitués of the Café de la Cebada. He did not play *jotas, polos, sevillanas,* nor anything Andalusian, not even polkas; he spent the night interpreting Beethoven's sonatas and Chopin's concertos. The customers were in despair, for they could not beat time with their spoons.

Once again he went wandering in the poorest parts of the city. A charitable soul, hearing casually of his condition, helped him indirectly, because Juan shrank from the idea of begging. He ate just enough to keep himself from dying of starvation in some tavern in the low quarters, and for fifteen centimes slept among beggars and thieves in a garret kept for this purpose. On one occasion whilst he slept they stole his trousers and left him a patched pair made of drill. It was in November.

Poor Juan, who had always kept in mind the chimera of his brother's return, now overwhelmed with misfortune, began to nourish it with fervour. He asked some one to write to Havana, although no address could be put on the letter as none was known; he endeavoured to find out if he had been seen, but without result; and everyday he spent some time on his knees praying for him to be sent to his help. The only happy moments of this unhappy youth were those passed in prayer in the corner of some deserted church. Hidden behind a pillar, breathing the acrid odours of the wax and the damp, listening to the spluttering of the tapers and the faint sound of the prayers of the few faithful dotted about the church, his innocent soul left this world that was so cruelly ill-treating him and flew to commune with God and His Holy Mother. Devotion to the Virgin had been deeply fixed in his heart since his

childhood. As he had hardly known his mother, he sought instinctively from the Mother of God the tender and loving protection which only a woman can give to a child: he had composed in her honour some hymns and prayers, and he never went to sleep without touching with his lips the scapular he wore round his neck.

But a day came, however, when heaven and earth deserted him. Refused on all sides, without a piece of bread to put into his mouth, without clothes to keep out the cold, our unfortunate friend saw with terror that the time for begging was close at hand. A desperate struggle took place in the depths of his soul. Pain and shame fought hand to hand with necessity: the darkness surrounding him increased the anguish of this battle. In the end, as was to be expected, hunger triumphed. After passing many hours sobbing, and praying God for strength to bear his misfortune, he resolved to appeal to charity; but yet the unhappy man wanted to mask his humiliation, and decided to sing in the streets at night-time only. He possessed a fair voice, and knew how to sing well; but he was faced with the difficulty of having no instrument on which to accompany himself. Finally, another miserable wretch, slightly better off than himself, let him have a damaged old guitar, and after mending it as best he could and shedding copious tears, he went out on a December night into the street. His heart beat violently; his legs shook. When he tried to sing in one of the main streets he could not; pain and shame brought a lump to his throat. He leant against the wall of a house, rested for a few moments, and when he felt better, began singing the romance of the first act of *La Favorita*. The attention of the passers-by was at once attracted to a blind man who was not singing *peteneras* or *malagueñas*, and many formed a circle round him, and not a few, on seeing how he mastered the difficulties of the work, murmured their surprise and dropped a few coppers into the hat, which was hanging from his arm. When the romance was finished he began the solo in the fourth act of *L'Africaine*. But too many people had collected round him and the authorities feared that this would create disorder, for it was recognised by the guardians of the peace that persons who gather in the streets to listen to a blind man show by so doing dangerous instincts of rebellion and hostility to the institutions, an attitude, in fine, incompatible with public order and the safety of the State. Therefore a policeman seized Juan roughly by the arm and said to him:

"Here, go home at once, and don't stop on the way."

"But I am not harming any one."

"You are obstructing the footway; move on, move on, if you don't want to be locked up."

It is really consoling to see with what care the governing authorities try to keep the public streets always free from singing beggars.

And I believe, in spite of opinions to the contrary, that if they could keep them equally free from thieves and murderers, they would be heartily glad to do so.

Poor Juan retired to his pig-sty very distressed, because he was good at heart, at having for an instant endangered internal peace and caused the intervention of the executive power. He had earned five reales and ten centimes. With that money he bought food the next day, and paid for the use of the miserable straw mattress on which he slept. At night-time he again went out and sang selections from operas and songs. Again people collected round him and again the authorities intervened, shouting roughly:

"Move on, move."

But if he moved on he did not earn a sou, because the passers-by could not hear him! Nevertheless Juan walked on and on, because he shrank, more than from death itself, from the idea of breaking the commands of the authorities, and disturbing, even for a moment, the peace of his country.

Every night his earnings grew less. On the one hand the necessity of always moving on, and on the other, the absence of novelty, which costs one very dear in Spain, were depriving him every day of a few centimes. What he took home was hardly enough to keep him from dying of hunger. His position was now desperate. Only one bright spot did the poor fellow still see in the blackness of his distressing situation. This bright spot was the return of his brother Santiago. Every night on leaving the house with the guitar swinging from his neck the same thought occurred to him: "If Santiago were in Madrid and heard me sing he would recognise my voice." And this hope, or rather this chimera, was the only thing that gave him strength to bear his burden.

Another day came, however, when his anguish and pain knew no bounds. The previous evening he had not earned more than twenty centimes. It had been so cold! For Madrid had awakened under a blanket of snow four inches thick. And all the day it snowed incessantly, which did not trouble most people, and was a source of joy to many admirers of the æsthetic. In particular, poets enjoying comfortable positions spent the greater part of the day watching through their windows the flakes as they fell, and thinking out pretty and ingenious similes such as make the audience in the theatre shout, "Bravo! bravo!" or make one exclaim, on reading them in a book of verses, "What a clever young man this is!"

Juan had not taken more than a cup of bad coffee and a roll of bread. He could not satisfy his hunger by contemplating the beauty of the snow, firstly, because he could not see; and secondly, even were he not blind, it was difficult to see it through the dirty window in his garret. He spent the day doubled up on the mattress, thinking of the days of his childhood and mentally fondling

the idea of his brother's return. When night came on, driven by necessity, fainting, he went down into the street to implore alms. He had no guitar now; he had sold it for three pesetas on a previous occasion of great need.

The snow fell with the same steadiness, we may say with the same cruelty. The legs of the poor blind man trembled as they did on the first day he went out to sing, but this time not with shame but with hunger. He passed along the streets as best he could with the mud above his ankles. His ears told him that few pedestrians were about; the carriages made no sound, and he was nearly knocked down by one. In one of the central streets he at last began to sing the first selection of opera that came to his lips. His voice issued from his throat, weak and hoarse; no one approached him even out of curiosity. "Let us try elsewhere," he muttered, and went along the Carrera de San Jerónimo, walking slowly through the snow, covered already by a white layer and with his feet splashing in the wet. The cold was getting into his bones; hunger gave him a sharp pain in his stomach. There came a moment when the cold and pain were so intense that he felt himself swooning; he thought he was dying, and lifting his thoughts to the Virgin, his protectress, he exclaimed in a strangled voice, "Mother, help me!" and after pronouncing these words he felt a little better and walked, or rather dragged himself, to the square of Las Cortes. There he leant against a lamp-post, and still thinking of the help of the Virgin, began to sing Gounod's "Ave Maria," of which he had always been very fond. But still no one approached. The townspeople were all gathered in the cafés and theatres, or else in their homes amusing their children by the fireside. The snow continued falling slowly and heavily, determined to provide the newspaper reporters next day with something to tell their readers in a dozen pretty phrases. The pedestrians who casually passed him did so hastily, muffled in their capes and hidden under their umbrellas. The street lamps had put on their white night-caps and gave out a melancholy light. Not a sound was heard but the vague and distant murmur of the traffic, and the ceaseless fall of the snowflakes like a light and prolonged rustling of silk. Only the voice of Juan quavered in the silence of the night saluting the Mother of Outcasts. At times his song seemed more like a cry of anguish than a hymn of salutation; at others, a sad and resigned moan which froze the heart more than the cold of the snow. In vain did the blind man cry to Heaven for help; in vain did he repeat the sweet name of Mary numberless times, suiting it to the different tones of the melody. Seemingly, Heaven and the Virgin were far off and did not hear him: the neighbours in the square were near, but they did not want to hear him. No one came out to take him in; no balcony window was opened even to throw him a copper. The passers-by,

as though pursued closely by pneumonia, did not dare to stop.

Finally he could sing no more: his voice died in his throat; his legs were giving way under him and his hands becoming numbed. He took a few steps and sat down on the pavement at the foot of the railing round a garden. He rested his elbows on his knees and sunk his head between his hands. He thought vaguely that the last moments of his life had come; and he again started praying feverishly, imploring divine mercy.

After a time he thought he noticed that a passer-by stopped in front of him and he felt himself seized by the arm. He raised his head, and suspecting that it would be the usual, asked timidly:

"Are you a policeman?"

"I am not a policeman," replied the man, "but come, get up!"

"I am afraid I can't, sir."

"Are you very cold, then?"

"Yes, sir . . . and besides I have had nothing to eat to-day."

"Well, I will help you. . . . Come on . . . up!"

The gentleman caught Juan by the arms and put him on his feet: he was a strong man.

"Now lean on me and we will try to find a cab."

"But where are you taking me?"

'Not to any bad place; are you afraid?"

"Oh no, my heart tells me that you are a kind person."

"Come along . . . let us get home quickly so that you can dry your clothes and have something hot."

"God will repay you, sir . . . the Virgin will repay you. . . . I thought I was going to die there."

"Nonsense . . . don't talk about that now. . . . The thing is to find a cab quickly. . . . Come along. . . . What is the matter? Did you stumble?"

"Yes, sir; I think my foot struck a lamp-post . . . you see I am blind!"

"Blind!" asked the unknown sharply.

"Yes, sir."

"Since when?"

"Since I was born."

Juan felt the arm of his protector tremble; and they went on walking in silence. Finally the man stopped a moment and asked him in a changed voice:

"What is your name?"

"Juan."

"Juan what?"

"Juan Martinez."

"And your father's name was Manuel, eh? Bandsman in the third artillery?"

"Yes, sir."

At the same instant the blind man felt himself seized vigorously by two strong arms that nearly crushed him, and in his ear he heard a shaking voice exclaim:

"Thank God! I've found you! How awful! . . . how wonderful! Oh! what a blackguard I am; I am your brother Santiago."

And the two brothers sobbed in each other's arms for several minutes in the middle of the street. The snow was falling on them gently.

Santiago suddenly freed himself from his brother's arms and began to shout angrily:

"A cab, a cab! Isn't there a cab over there? . . . Curse my luck! Come along, Juanillo, make an effort; we shall soon be there. . . . But, where have the cabs got to? . . . Not a single one about. . . . There is one in the distance. . . . Thank God! . . . The idiot is going away! Here is another . . . this is ours. Here, driver, . . . five dollars if you fly like the wind to No. 10 Castellana. . . ."

And lifting his brother in his arms as though he were a child, he put him into the cab and got in after him. The driver started the horses and the cab sped quickly and noiselessly over the snow. As they drove along, Santiago, still tightly holding the blind man, rapidly told him his story. He had not been in Cuba but in Costa Rica, where he made a respectable fortune; but he had lived many years in the country with scarcely any communication with Europe. He wrote three or four times by the boats trading with England, but obtained no reply. And always intending to return to Spain in the following year, he ceased making inquiries, planning to give them an agreeable surprise. Then he married, and this event considerably delayed his return. But for four months he had been in Madrid, where he learned from the parish register that his father was dead. Of Juan they gave him vague and contradictory information: some said that he also had died; others, that reduced to utter poverty, he had started wandering through the country singing and playing the guitar. All efforts to discover his whereabouts were fruitless. Fortunately, Providence guided his steps. Santiago laughed and cried alternately, always showing the frank, generous, and jovial spirit of his boyhood.

The cab stopped at last. A servant came out to open the door. They practically carried Juan into the house. On entering he noticed a warm temperature, the aroma of comfort that pervades wealth; his feet sank in soft carpets. Under Santiago's directions, two servants immediately removed his sodden rags and dressed him in clean warm clothes. At once, in the study itself, where a pleasant fire was burning, they brought him a basin of comforting soup and then meat of different kinds, to which they helped him

with due discretion considering his weak state. They also brought up from the cellars the most matured and exquisite wines. Santiago kept moving about, giving the necessary orders, every moment asking the blind man anxiously:

" How do you feel now, Juan? Are you better? Do you want some more wine? Are you warm enough? "

When the supper was finished they both remained by the fire for a few minutes. Santiago asked a servant if his wife and the children had retired, and receiving an affirmative reply, said to his brother excitedly:

" Don't you play the piano? "

" Yes."

" Well, come and give my wife and the children a fright. Come into the drawing-room."

And he led him in and sat him down before the piano. Then he raised the lid to increase the sound, carefully opened all the doors and arranged everything so as to give the family a surprise; but doing so with such care, walking on tip-toe, speaking in a comical voice, and generally behaving so funnily that Juan on noticing it could not help laughing and exclaiming:

" Just the same Santiago! "

" Now play, Juanillo, play as hard as you can."

The blind man began to play a warlike march. The silent house suddenly shook like a musical-box when it is wound up. The notes tumbled over each other as they left the piano, but always in bellicose rhythm. Santiago exclaimed from time to time:

" Harder, Juanillo, harder! "

And the blind man went on striking the keyboard with increasing vigour.

" I can see my wife behind the curtains. . . . Go on, Juanillo, go on! . . . The poor girl is in her night-dress . . . he . . . he . . . I am pretending not to see her. . . . She will think I am mad . . . he, he. . . . Go on, Juanillo, go on! "

Juan obeyed his brother, although without relish now, because he wanted to know his sister-in-law and her children.

" Now I can see my daughter Manolita, who is also in her night-dress. . . . Hush, we have also wakened Paquito! . . . Didn't I say they would all get a fright! . . . But they will catch cold if they walk about like that much longer. . . . Stop playing, Juan, stop playing." The infernal din ceased.

" Here, Adela, Manolita, Paquito, put some clothes on and come and meet my brother Juan. This is Juan I have told you so much about, and I have just found him in the street within an ace of being frozen to death in the snow. . . . Hurry up, get dressed quickly! "

Santiago's kind-hearted family immediately came forward to

embrace the poor blind man. The voice of his wife was sweet and musical: to Juan it seemed that the Virgin spoke to him: he noticed that she wept when her husband narrated how he found him. And she even wanted to add more comforts to those Santiago had given him: she sent for a foot-warmer and herself placed it under his feet: then she wrapped a rug round his legs and put a soft cap on his head. The children hovered round the chair caressing their uncle and letting him caress them. In silence they listened, tongue-tied by emotion, to the brief story he gave them of his misfortune. Santiago called himself names: his wife cried: the children, wide-eyed, held his hand and said: "You won't be hungry any more, or go out into the street without an umbrella, will you, uncle? . . . I don't want you to, Manolita doesn't want you to, either . . . nor papa, nor mamma."

"I dare you to give him your bed, Paquito!" said Santiago, becoming merry again immediately.

"But it is too small, papa! Upstairs there is a huge great big one he can have——"

"I don't want a bed now," interjected Juan. "I am so comfortable here!"

"Does your stomach hurt you as it did before?" asked Manolita, hugging him and kissing him.

"No, my child, no, bless you! . . . It does not hurt at all. . . . I am very happy. . . . The only thing is, I feel sleepy. . . . I can hardly keep my eyes open . . ."

"Well, don't keep awake for us, Juan," said Santiago.

"Yes, uncle, go to sleep, go to sleep," said Manolita and Paquito in the same breath, putting their arms round his neck and covering him with kisses.

. . . . . .

And he went to sleep. And he woke up in Heaven.

At dawn on the following day, a policeman stumbled over his body in the snow. The ambulance doctor certified that death was caused by exposure to the cold.

"Look, Jiménez," said one of the policemen who had carried him, to his comrade, "look at the smile on his face."

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS

THE CURATE'S COLT

MANY of you must have known my friend the Curé of Arbin, and have had occasion to admire his noble and generous character, the simplicity of his nature, and a certain innocence of soul that God only gives to those He has chosen for Himself: qualities which made him esteemed and loved by all. He lived in the rectory within a stone's-throw of the town, waited upon by a very old woman and her husband no less ancient. There was also a bull-dog which nobody could remember as a puppy, and a horse that had come into his possession more than twenty years ago, and then it was not young. As Don Pedro, for so the curé was called, was well over seventy, it was quite correct to say that the house was a museum of fossils. We will first have the story of the horse, leaving the history of the bull-dog for another time, as it is less interesting.

In the town it was simply known as "Don Pedro's colt." But as the reader will understand, this was only a nickname they had given it for fun. The author of the jest must have been Xuan de Manolín, at that time the most humorous and free-thinking soul in the parish. The beast's real name was Pichón, and it was so called by its owner and by the servants. It had once been grey; but when I saw it, all the black hair had fallen out or turned white. It was not bad to look at; peaceful by nature; its gait moderately racking. For this reason the curate had not dared to make him trot for years and preferred to leave half an hour earlier on his excursion to the neighbouring parishes. Patient, noble, sure, knowing those roads better than any, Pichón had enough qualities to make him prized by his master as a jewel. The outstanding virtue of this animal, however, was its frugality. As the little grass that grew in the meadow was nearly all eaten by a milch-cow owned by the curate, the unfortunate Pichón was compelled to wander for nine months in the year through paths and lanes, watching the grass spring up to nibble it long before it reached full growth. No hack, ancient or modern, ever digested his food to greater advantage; for his hindquarters were always rounded and glossy, as though he boarded in the house of a marquis. So much so that more than once Don Pedro was asked if he fed him on hay

and barley. Barley, for Pichón! He had heard of it sometimes; but seen it, never.

As though these qualities were not sufficient, Pichón possessed another very valuable one: a prodigious memory. Whenever the curate of Arbin had once stopped at any house in the neighbourhood, Pichón always stopped dead on passing there again, as though inviting him to dismount. Naturally, when it came to the house of the curate's sister in Felechosa, or to the rectory at Pino, where for many years Don Pedro had been playing a never-ending game of cards with the reverend brother, the horse not only stopped, but went straight to the stable.

But Pichón, without any reasonable cause, had many enemies in the town, some open, others hidden. Finding no means of combating him in open fight, they carried on a secret and insidious campaign: they assailed him through his old age. As though all of us were not to reach old age under penalty of death! thought the quadruped very reasonably. They began by giving him the derisive nickname of "colt." Well did Pichón know that he was not and did not pretend to be a colt. When had any one seen him frisking about, trying to look young before a mare, however giddy? To live honourably, avoid all foolishness, eat whatever one could get, and not meddle in the elections—these were the fundamental axioms he had learned from his long experience.

Not satisfied with nicknaming him, his adversaries adduced false evidence against him. They said that once on the way from Lena to Cabanaquinta he went to sleep with Don Pedro on his back, and a mule-driver had to wake him up with a stick. Pure calumny. What had happened was, that at the rectory at Llanolatabla, where his master stopped nearly seven hours, they had not given him a single blade of grass; and naturally he dropped from sheer weakness. In the same way the jocular neighbours, and many that were not, invented unkind stories about him, and ceaselessly teased the curate on the subject. At times this made Don Pedro very irritable in spite of his recognised patience. "Cáscaras! What has the poor animal done to those fools to make them so nasty about him?"

The most merciless of them was Xuan de Manolín. The curate never passed his tavern on horseback but he came to the door to shout one of his jibes; sometimes he even seized the horse by the bridle and, behaving very politely at first, ended by drawing down its lip and asking with apparent innocence:

"Have the marks disappeared from his teeth?"

The customers, who also came out to the door, shrieked with laughter at this and similar jibes, and Don Pedro rode away annoyed, muttering indignantly.

Finally, so harassed was he by the chaffing of his parishioners,

who were joined by his fellow-clerics of the neighbouring places when he met them on some feast day, that he resolved to get rid of the horse, although it would cause him genuine regret. Nevertheless when the fair came at Ascension time, when he proposed to sell it, he hesitated and very nearly turned back. But he had already told some of the neighbours what he was going to do. All the parish knew of his decision and applauded it. What would they say if he still kept Pichón after all?

Melancholy and miserable Don Pedro straddled him one morning, and step by step reached Oviedo. As he neared the town, his conscience pricked him more and more. Whichever way he looked at the matter, and although he thought of numerous examples of the case, the fact remained that it was nothing but ingratitude to sell poor Pichón after twenty years of faithful service. What would happen to him? Perhaps he would draw a coach: perhaps die shamefully in a bull-ring. In any event, martyrdom. The innocent way the horse walked along without misgiving or suspicion made its master feel a shame he could not hide.

At the fair, animals were very cheap. Pichón was old, nobody wanted him. Only one horse-dealer offered fifteen dollars for him. The curate finally let him go at that price for fear of the chaff of the neighbourhood if he appeared again with the silver-grey beast in Arbin. As soon as he lost sight of it he felt better, as the presence of the quadruped had been very painful. He took the train to the town, and when he arrived had the unhappiness to receive congratulations for what he secretly considered a misdeed. In a few days, however, the horse was entirely forgotten. But he certainly required another. Although he enjoyed good health, and, thanks to God, his legs were still strong, some of the parishes were very far, and it was impossible to borrow a horse from Xuan de Manolín every day or from Cosme, the miller. On the advice of these two and other well-informed parishioners, he decided not to wait for the fair of All Saints at Oviedo, but hoped to find a mount at the fair of San Pedro de Boñar, where nearly all the horses of the province of Leon were taken.

No sooner said than done. When the time came, availing himself of the mule of a friendly driver who was going to Leon with his drove, he took the road leading to Boñar by the Puerto de San Isidro. There it was just the contrary to Oviedo. Animals were dear. Under forty dollars it was impossible to buy a serviceable horse. For forty-three and the usual drink on completion of the bargain, our curate became the owner of a dark sorrel horse, not very spirited, but safe and steady, without its equal on that side of the Esla, or even in the valley of the Orbigo, according to the dealers who sold it to him. And so it ought to have been; because

Don Pedro remembered the Spanish proverb: "Sooner than tire, a sorrel horse will die."

On its back he turned once more towards his town, riding through Lillo and Isoba and crossing the abrupt passes of San Isidro. He journeyed along happily, satisfied with his purchase, as the animal took those steep hills well, and above all did not take fright, a possibility he had dreaded more than anything. But on arriving at Felechosa a thing happened which astonished him greatly. As he was going to dismount for a moment at his sister's house, the horse of its own accord went straight to the stable.

"What a nose that animal has!" exclaimed Don Pedro going into the house. And he swelled with pride.

He stopped there longer than he intended, and calculating how much time he had he saw it was impossible to stop at Pino for a game of cards with the curate. But on arriving at this place he received a fresh and still greater surprise. The horse, ignoring the pulls at the bridle and the blows from the stick, refused to follow the main road and, turning off slightly, went towards the priest's house and entered the stable.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" murmured Don Pedro, opening his eyes wide. And in gratitude for such marvellous instinct he stopped lashing it and got down to greet his friend.

When he reached the town, night had fallen, and so the neighbours were unable to see and admire the splendid and intelligent beast. But next day some of them came to the stable and, after inspection, said that it was a good horse, and heartily congratulated its owner on the purchase. "It's a *beauty* of a horse, Don Pedro! Now you have a mount that will last you till you die."

"What a blessing you got rid of that old thing, it might have died on the road any day!"

The curate pretended to be pleased with their congratulations; but that reminder of Pichón still impressed him unpleasantly.

Five or six days passed without occasion arising for Don Pedro to use his new horse, at the end of which time he told the servant to clean it and bridle it, as he intended going to Mieres. The man appeared in a few moments and said:

"Do you know, Father, that Leon (this being the name of the new horse) has some white marks that won't come off?"

"Rub hard, silly, rub hard; he has probably brushed against the wall."

In spite of his efforts the spots would not disappear. Then Don Pedro, annoyed, said to him: "Give it up, Manuel, you have no strength left. Watch me and see how I get them off at once."

And taking off his soutane and rolling up his shirt-sleeves he seized the brush and currycomb and started to clean it himself. But his hopes proved ill-founded. The marks not only would not

disappear but began to get larger and larger. " Here, bring some soap and warm water," said he finally, hot and angry.

And then there was trouble! The water was at once stained red, and the white marks on the horse spread till they nearly covered his body.

To sum up, so much did they rub him that in half an hour the sorrel horse had disappeared and in his place stood a white one.

Manuel took a few steps backwards, and with consternation written on his face, exclaimed: " God help me, if it isn't Pichón! "

The priest stood rooted to the root. And in truth, under the coating of red ochre, or some other dirty mixture they had used to disguise him, was the old, patient, much-abused Pichón.

The news spread like a flash through the town. In a short time a crowd of people were assembled in front of the rectory, guffawing and making witty remarks, as they looked at " the curate's colt " which the servant had brought out to the stable. When the fun was at its height, Don Pedro appeared in the passage, his face grim and angry, and said:

" It serves me right, Cáscaras, for having listened to such fools as you! . . . If anybody says a word to me about him again I shall break his bones. Cáscaras! Recáscaras! "

Understanding that he had good reason to be annoyed, the onlookers stopped joking and returned slowly to the town.

JACINTO OCTAVIO PICÓN

1853–1923

AFTER THE BATTLE

I

ALMOST hidden between trees of great age and surrounded by thick walls, there stood in one of the eastern departments of France a few years ago a superb mansion, sufficiently distant from highways and roads to show that whoever lived there loved solitude and calm. Round it was a garden uncultivated and neglected, which had grown to resemble in its wildness a virgin forest. The branches of the trees stretched out beyond the enclosure; the roots, well nourished with sap, had made the pathways uneven by their growth; the shoots of the shrubs were entwined one with the other in the thick grass and made passage difficult; a stream, winding among the thick trunks, lent its monotonous voice to the park; a pond, converted into a lake by the crumbling of the stones that once confined it, reflected like a black mirror the dark masses of the leafy groves; and at one end, aground in the mud, lay an abandoned and rotting gondola, burying itself by its own weight in the greenish tangle of the stagnant water. Clinging to the bricks and stones, climbing the roughened surface, the tenacious ivy had covered the walls of the house, and from the frieze of the first floor it hung in long wavy fringes, swayed by the wind. The grasses carpeted with green the spaces intended for flower-beds, the cultivated rose-bushes had been replaced by wild brambles, the amaranth gave way to the thistles, and where once grew the mignonette, nothing showed now but the mint. A narrow path, beaten by constant passage, led from the gate of the park to the house, and between the steps leading to the entrance, in the crevices of the stones, grew strips of thick green moss like broad bands of silky felt. Of two marble angels which formerly stood at the ends of the balustrade, only one remained on its pedestal; the other, fallen and half-buried in the earth, showed its torso covered with grey or gold stains, according as the sun or the damp had affected it. In the interior of the house was a large patio and in the centre of it a well, its iron bars climbed by the weeds which grew round the base; the stone flags on the ground were framed in green; and

at the corners of the shelters overhanging the balconies, the gutters were being widened by the continuous trickle of the rain.

The rooms preserved traces of the luxury with which they were furnished. The satin, the brocade, the velvet, and the damask lavished on furniture and walls were worth a fortune; the passementerie, lambrequin, curtains, and carpets made a rich ensemble; but everything was old, faded by the light, and impaired by time. At the edges of the hangings, the warm-toned satins had paled; the seats of the chairs were threadbare; the gilt on the frames was chipped; the doors hung badly on their hinges; and the marble tiles moved under worn carpets. The dust, spread over canopies, silks, and mouldings, softened the tints and dulled the brightness; and in the candles of the chandeliers and candelabra time had changed the dull whiteness of the sperm to the dirty yellow of beeswax.

Within those old walls, impregnated with the character and colour of another century, there lived in seclusion a most beautiful woman called Hortensia.

II

No one knew who she was: voluntarily separated from the bustle of the world and waited on by half-a-dozen servants, her existence was, so it seemed, purposely arranged to excite the curiosity of others.

There everything was sad: in the parterre were no flowers now, or poultry in the stockyard: even the birds fled from the neighbourhood of the house, preferring the pleasant shades of the adjacent wood to the slopes of the roof, covered with dark slate.

Doubtless there existed great analogies between that woman and her residence, similarities on which, perhaps, was founded her affection for the old mansion and the gloomy park. The rooms and the walks formed, by their sadness, a proper and adequate setting for that calm and melancholy beauty. The languid movements of Hortensia and the slow swaying of the half-fallen branches, as though tired of living, were very similar: between the paleness of her face and that ever whitish sky was a mysterious resemblance, in which blended the poetic melancholy of the country and the placid serenity of the woman: her look and the light of those places were alike; vague, undecided, as though continually bathed, one in a mist suspended in the atmosphere, and the other in a moisture of tears that brightened her eyes.

Repentant Magdalen to some, inconsolable widow to others, lover waiting hopelessly for the advent of one who never came, Hortensia was a living enigma to the people of the district. If her heart held secrets, no one succeeded in learning them. Like a trunk that hides 'neath rough bark the wood-borer which corrodes its heart, so did she disguise her troubles under the impassive calm of her countenance.

III

Came the year 1870, and when hostilities broke out between Germany and France, the country people fled in terror. The Empire lost four successive battles, and the struggle ceased to be called *the war* and became *the invasion*. The roads were blocked with escaping peasants driving their live stock before them; harassed beasts scattered, destroying the crops; carts upset, overloaded with the furniture of the fleeing country-folk; and columns of smoke from the fires filled the atmosphere with threatening clouds, in which danced the sparks from the burning roofs.

The property belonging to Hortensia was situate on a plain not far from which rose two hills, separated by a gorge that the French had fortified, and behind the house was a hamlet, considered to be a strategic point.

The Prussians wished to force back the outposts who occupied the plain, and hardly had the battle started when Hortensia, from the top of her house, saw great masses of troops which spread themselves in close formation over the meadows, and extending later into dark lines, were hidden in the little clouds of white smoke torn at intervals by the flashes of the artillery. For three days the boom of the guns was heard, on the fourth the Prussians assailed the French position with increased energy, and shortly afterwards fugitives began to pass the garden wall, soldiers with the terror of defeat stamped on their faces, and ruined farmers leaving their wrecked dwellings behind them and their fields laid waste by the hostile fire.

As the day drew to a close, when all the vanquished who could escape had passed, Hortensia saw on the grey stretch of a pathway leading to the house a group enveloped in the whirling dust raised above the bushes by the wind. It was like a dark horizontal line between two vertical ones, which advanced with slow and measured movements. Its shape stood out at last, clear and distinct, so that the eyes could make out the figures. They were two soldiers who were carrying a wounded comrade on a stretcher.

Hortensia guessed they were coming to her house, and, descending from the roof, ordered her own bed to be got ready; and so speedily did she act that when they reached the door of the park she was there to receive them, saying as she indicated the path they were to follow:

"Along there."

IV

Following that wounded man came others, and then others, and afterwards many more. The first were placed in the best apartments; finally, all the rooms were occupied. It was necessary to accommodate them in the servants' quarters, in the corridors, even in

the attics and stables. The house was converted into a field hospital; a section of the army medical corps established itself there; and as the distant roar of the artillery died down, within the walls of the mansion could be heard the moans and groans of the wounded.

Hortensia took from her wardrobe a superb dress of red satin, divided it into four with her scissors, and, sewing two broad strips crosswise on a white sheet, ordered this improvised flag to he hoisted on the highest point of the house.

V

The Germans had routed the French, but the latter re-formed a short distance from the mansion and resolved to defend the gorge. From the positions gained the Prussians could shell the hollow, and between the latter and the victorious batteries stood the house of Hortensia, on the roof of which waved the Red Cross Flag. Then the Commander-in-Chief of the Germans ordered the property to be evacuated, and to effect this an officer at once set out, dismounting half an hour later before the railings of the park.

The aide-de-camp, who expected to see some frightened and submissive villager, was received by Hortensia with a blank refusal and a resistance impossible to overcome with the two orderlies attending him; but he was smitten by the charms of the woman who showed him all the rooms of her house full of men mangled by grape-shot, and accompanying him to the gate of the park declared that she would not leave the place, and that if they bombarded it she would suffer the same fate as those who had placed themselves under her protection.

The officer returned, annoyed at receiving such a vigorous reply, but so struck with her beauty that when reporting what had happened to his chief, although he told him a great deal about the large number of wounded he had just seen and of the refusal he had listened to, he told him much more about that fascinating woman. So much did he praise her that the General, a young man who was evidently no fool, decided to settle the difficulty himself, and mounting his horse, with two soldiers as escort, set out for the mansion.

Night had fallen when the chief of the German forces, vanquishers of France in that region, reached the railing surrounding the house. The branches hung over the walks, converting each path into an archway; on the horizon some orange clouds were darkening gradually, until they remained as stains of deep purple on the azure sky; the trees reflected on the ponds their shapeless masses, which trembled slightly in the wind; the ivy hanging from the tops of the walls let its loose shoots sway; the abandoned flowerbeds exhaled the fresh penetrating smell of damp earth; the darkness of the night was beginning to envelop the square mass of the house; and a few bats flew round, attracted by the light of the windows,

which threw their yellowish rays on to the gravel in the garden.

At the foot of the door, as though thrown down before the entrance to a precinct of peace, were two piles of weapons; side by side in the grass could be seen the rifles of the conquered and of the conquerors.

Hortensia received the General in the vestibule, leaning on the handrail of the balustrade. The Prussian was still young. His high rank was based on his nobility: his elegant and manly beauty, his chivalrous and martial appearance would have captivated any other woman. He forgot when he saw her that he was a soldier, remembering only that he was a man, and uncovering his head courteously, advanced towards her with his helmet under his arm, as he would have carried his gibus in a salon.

"I receive you here," said Hortensia, "because my house is a pool of blood: inside you may trample on French uniforms, but you would risk trampling on German ones as well."

The discussion was lengthy, but the General was not violent or rude; he even heard with calm the same resolute refusal which his aide-de-camp had transmitted to him. Hortensia, leaning slightly on the balustrade, looked like some fantastic image. Her white dress absorbed the little brightness there was in the vestibule, everything was becoming black around her, and the outline of her figure showed up against the murky background, while the light reflected from a round window on the ground floor seemed to place behind her head a golden halo, cut across by the lines of lead which secured the panes of glass. . . . The frogs started a discordant chorus in the adjacent pond, and at intervals could be heard the calling of the German bugles in the distance.

But the Prussian only heard the sweet voice of Hortensia. He forgot the Fatherland and the King, the hatred for France, the victory and the war. The barbarian from the north fell at the feet of the Latin woman, and she raised him unruffled, without anger, comprehending that her beauty was an excuse for such audacity.

"Go," said she to him. "To-morrow, no doubt, you will attack the gorge that lies behind this house . . . now understand me clearly: If not a single one of your shells falls here, if the bullets of your battalions do not strike against these walls, if those who are suffering here are not further injured through any fault of yours . . . then come in the evening and your triumph will be double."

. . . . . .

A moment later the German was on his way back to the camp, intending to demonstrate to his companions that there was no need to evacuate that house; and in the mansion reigned an imposing silence, which was only broken by the lament of some wounded soldier or the wild caw of the birds hidden in the hollow tree-trunks of the adjoining wood.

Next day the invaders attacked the French position, silencing their fire after several hours of horrible cannonade. History will never tell what commands were given for that fight, nor who ordered the assault; but the fact remains that not a single bullet flattened itself against the walls of the house; not a shell burst in the park; no fragment of grape-shot fell within the boundaries of Hortensia's domain; the projectiles described their trajectories passing over the roof without grazing it, whistling above the branches without scratching them; and at the conclusion of the skirmish there was not a stone chipped nor a tree-trunk scored by the lead on the whole of the estate.

VI

After the battle of the day, the silence and calm of the night descended over the fields. On the distant horizon, as though issuing from the ground red with the blood poured out, the moon was rising slowly and majestically, like a great ball of fire: first it illuminated, with the reflected light of flames, the farm-houses and the woods; then, as it ascended the heavens, it seemed less yellow, more brilliant, as though the higher it rose from the ground the purer it became; finally, from its immense height it dominated the vast extent of the country.

Hortensia, serene as that summer night which enveloped her in its mist of silver light, awaited the Prussian at the same spot as on the previous evening, her elbows resting on the marble balustrade, her gaze fixed on the garden, thinking every moment that she heard the gallop of the horses. Suddenly came the sound of the iron-shod hoofs on the road. Soon afterwards the German handed the reins to the orderly who followed him, and advanced towards the steps.

Hortensia received him graciously, gave him her hand to kiss, and then turning round, went into a spacious room from which two lateral doors gave access to the other apartments on the ground floor. She at once picked up a little lamp she had previously placed on an iron seat, and by pushing lightly with her foot against one of these doors, opened one of its leaves: raising the lamp as high above her head as she could, and letting the light fall within, she showed the German three wounded soldiers lying upon the ground on mattresses and rugs. One of them, sitting up against the wall, had his forehead bound round with cloths, and from between the folds of the bandage a little stream of blood trickled down in a thin line, till it was lost in his beard; another was breathing heavily in his sleep, as though an enormous weight lay upon his chest; and the third, his face buried under the folds of the cloak which served him as a pillow, sobbed as he tried to stifle his moans between the double thickness of the cloth.

Hortensia allowed the German to contemplate that picture, and then, pushing him outside, opened the door of the room opposite. There a French officer was lying on a yellow divan of old damask. His legs were stretched out on a heap of cushions, and his face, contracted by the pain, showed the grim tenacity of one determined not to complain. A small lamp, burning low, shed its subdued light over the room, the shadows of the hangings blackened the light carpet which covered the floor, and on a small lamp-stand lay forgotten a case of surgical instruments and a roll of lint.

The Prussian scarcely had time to take in what he saw before Hortensia led him to the upper rooms. The marble staircase was stained with mud; in some places blood had left a trail of large drops; and on one of the landings, seated on a stool, was a man with his right hand bandaged, trying to fill his pipe with his left. They reached the first floor. The most luxurious salon of the house, once reserved for festivities and entertainments, was transformed into a hospital ward. In the centre, upon a jasper table, were several small pots, and on the marvellously sculptured mantelpiece a basin of common earthenware, full of dirty and blood-stained water, on which floated a few pieces of rag. On a background of white pillows stood out the heads of many wounded, one of them beginning to show in his face the proximity of death. From a couch near the door rose an acrid and repugnant smell. Two large mirrors, placed opposite one another at each end of the room, reproduced the beds in a long row, multiplying their reflections endlessly; and that perspective, deceptive but no less sad than the reality, gave the salon an appearance which inspired gloom and consternation.

They went over the whole house from the attics to the kitchen, which had been converted into a dispensary. Not a door was left unopened. Finally, coming to her own room, Hortensia drew back the curtains round the bed, and, half hidden on pillows of finest linen, appeared the almost infantile face of a soldier who perhaps, in the delirium of fever, thought he felt the last kiss they gave him as he left his village. The German looked impassively at that victim of his victory, and then, turning to the lady, seemed to ask with his eyes when the annoying pilgrimage would end.

Hortensia made him pass through yet more rooms and more apartments full of wounded, until, going out into the vestibule, they arrived at the stairway whence they had started. There, raising the lamp to the level of her face, which was illuminated by the last glare of the dying flame, as though it had now fulfilled its mission, she stretched out her arm towards the park gate, and dismissing the Prussian with a charming smile, said to him serenely with the calmness of the night:

"You have seen for yourself; there is no room for us."

JACINTO OCTAVIO PICÓN

GASPARON'S REVENGE

THE brazen throats of the bells boomed out the mellow noon hour, the gates opened, and before the last clang of the clappers had died away the first surges of the human sea inside began to pour out resistlessly—the silent, weary multitude that formed the personnel of the factories. No one spoke; neither man sought woman, nor the girl the young man's flattery and wooing, nor the child its customary games and idleness. The strong appeared fagged out, the young old and feeble, and the old half-dead. They were a breed twice oppressed, these factory hands, by ignorance and selfishness. The crowd was quickly dispersed, like a cloud the winds tear into ribbons and then shred to atoms; it poured out first in a turgid stream, split up into groups, and quickly drifted off in silent pairs, pairs which seemed to divide without audible farewells or salutes, some taking the roads to their houses, others entering the near-by inns and taverns, disseminating and losing themselves, merged and absorbed by the agitated circulations of the busy neighbourhood.

One of the last to come out was Gaspar Santiagos, also known as Gasparon, or Big Gaspar, because of his tremendous strength, great height, and massive build. These characteristics dominated his whole appearance, giving him a sympathetic, kindly, slow manner and visage; but his face, for all that, was bright and quick of expression, his glance frank and sincere. He was so robust, he looked like Hercules in a blouse.

He walked rapidly along in the shadow of the mud wall, crossed two or three streets, traversed a plaza, and passing on by covered alleyways and vacant lots to save himself needless steps, debouched upon a wide street whose gigantic elms knit overhead, their delicate lacework of foliage forming a coolly inviting arched vault of shadow, under which sat awaiting him on the fallen trunk of one of the giant trees a pretty and graceful young woman, with a neat basket before her, a dog beside her knee, and a clean, fresh baby in her lap. The delighted beast rushed toward him, the little one stretched out its tiny fists, and while the man drew up the basket and broke apart the sixteen-ounce golden loaf, his wife, never taking her eyes from his face, laid out to one side on the tree-trunk the salad, uncorked the bottle of red wine, gave him his napkin and

wooden spoon, and poured out the well-cooked, steaming stew into the thick but clean white plate edged with a blue stripe.

When the bell sounding the recall from the luncheon hour began ringing in the distance, Gasparon hastily tilted the last drops of stew and wine down his capacious throat, lighted a cigarette, gave the child a kiss, threw the dog the broken remnants of his lunch, and, affectionately squeezing the wife as a miser embraces his treasure-chest, was off on the road to the factory at a rapid pace.

He entered the gate, crossed a yard full of pig-iron in piles, and entered a long, wide shop, lighted by windows through whose blackened panes could be seen grimy walls, great piles of coal, spark-spitting, crackling forges, and tall chimneys that vomited forth in dense clouds great bubbles of the heavy coal smoke and pulverised dust. High overhead and lengthwise of the shop ran in complicated lines an incalculable number of shining steel and burnished iron levers, columns, and wheels, united by leather belts which surged up, swung low, and gyrated dizzily like crazy members of some living mechanical organism, in which nothing could falter without paralysing the whole machine. The planked floor trembled with the pulsations of the steam, whose stertorous sighing could be heard all about; and from other shops, weakened by the uproar and the distance, came the clangour of metal being beaten and the droning hum of whirring machines mixed with the bench-songs of women.

At the end of the first shop stood another exactly like it, and spanning the court between the two was a narrow little bridge, beside which a colossal flywheel revolved at high speed.

When Gasparon reached the middle of the little structure, he saw an apprentice come running out of the second shop at such speed and having such impetus that he could not check his wild career. There was no time to go back, and, perceiving that both could not pass the great wheel at the same time, Gasparon bent his huge bulk far outward over the rail, flattening himself as much as he could. The lad came on like a streak of lightning, turned badly as he violently collided with the big fellow, and fell face downward, barely remaining upon the single, wide, heavy timber that formed the floor of the bridge, hanging suspended over the oily abyss of the deep wheel-pit, not daring to let go his hold and fall, unable long to remain where he lay. Gasparon, more fearful of the distant than of the nearer danger, stretched out his hand to the child, who, blinded by fear, snatched at it with such force and anxiety that the powerful workman was well-nigh overbalanced. As he lost his equilibrium, Gasparon instinctively threw out his free arm wildly as a counterpoise. His fingers came into sudden contact with something—he gripped a spoke of the whirling fly-wheel, and the mighty arm splintered just above the hand. The

lad said afterwards that, to add to his terror, he heard it break with such a noise as one hears when the wood-chopper's axe rives apart a splintered timber. But, even hurt as he was, the fellow retained his presence of mind well enough to step back coolly a pace or two, raise the frightened boy in his sound arm, and carry him to safety on the shop floor before he collapsed, struck down silently by the severity of his pain.

There was shouting and running, and his comrades picked him up gently, taking him in a chair to the near-by hospital, where the surgeons took off the hopelessly maimed arm at the elbow.

Gasparon's convalescence was slow; in it disappeared first all his little savings, then the pawnbroker's loans upon his Sunday clothes, his cloak, and his wife's mantle; after that a collection taken up for him by friends and charitable neighbours vanished speedily; and last of all a donation from the treasury of the Strikers' Aid Fund. There was no use thinking of any new sort of manual labour; for the arm he had lost was his right, and he had been right-handed.

Forty days or so after the accident his wife presented herself at the cashier's window at the factory office. It was a small room, divided by a wooden partition, surmounted by a metal screenwork pierced here and there with small openings like windows, through which she could see a well-dressed old gentleman in a freshly laundered shirt reading a paper, seated close beside the cash-drawer. About him, well within his vision, stood two men posting endless figures industriously in great books, over whose little pine pulpits they bent.

"What is it you want?" asked one of the clerks as she approached.

"How is Gasparon getting along?" queried the other kindly.

"Well! As if he could 'get along' at all—a one-handed man!"

"And you have come——?"

"To get his pay," she replied nervously.

One of the clerks opened a large book and began turning the leaves, mumbling "Gasparon—Gasparon."

"His name is Santiagos—boring-mill gang, second section," volunteered the woman dully.

"Ah, yes; of course—Gaspar Santiagos! Here he is!"

"And he gets——" She sighed, and her eyes were troubled.

The clerk figured rapidly for a moment on a scrap of paper, and without looking up, asked, "Was he paid the week before?"

"Yes, sir."

"H'm—then there are—there must be——"

The old gentleman in the clean shirt dropped his paper and looked up, but not at the anxious woman.

"What day was it he hurt himself?" he demanded.

"The twentieth of last month—Wednesday, about two o'clock," she replied sadly.

"Then there is no trouble in finding out what is due the man," remarked the old gentleman suavely. "Monday, one; Tuesday, two; Wednesday—two days and a half, at four and a half the day, makes eleven pesetas and twenty-five centimos: two dollars and a quarter altogether. Pay her, Luis." He shrugged his shoulders and picked up his paper.

The clerk took a small wicker basket full of silver from one of the drawers of the desk and counted out the pitiful sum, making the payment without a word. The young woman, mechanically taking what was proffered, went out, weeping softly. When the noise of her footsteps had died away, the clean-looking old gentleman remarked severely: "Don't forget that Gasparon is discharged! Make a note of it on your books."

When the workmen learned, as they speedily did, that Gasparon had been given only his bare two and one-half days' pay, their wrath boiled over and their indignation knew no bounds. Delegates were appointed quickly from the various shops and mills of the great works, and the little convention, meeting one night in the back room of The Frenchman Tavern to learn the full details of the case and take action thereon, the big fellow himself was cited to appear and state his facts.

Gasparon related his misfortune with the greatest good nature, showed his fellows the cicatrised stump of his arm, scarred deeply, and afterward during the progress of the meeting seemed more interested in bothering his neighbours to roll cigarettes for him than in the business on hand. He had not yet been able to manage his *cigarillos* with only his left hand, and since comfort is a prime factor in life, he was deeply engrossed in his tobacco.

A smutty lamp which gave scarcely any light burned feebly overhead without illuminating the room. The smoke of cigars and cigarettes and the fumes of the cheap oil and wick filled the chamber with a stifling haze; it was almost impossible to see faces, while heads and bodies shaded off indistinguishably into the pungent gloom.

"I bear on my shoulders the weight of fifty-two years of shop work," growled a heavy voice from somewhere in the rear of the room. It was the voice of a man who, by virtue of his age, had spoken first. "And I know more than the rest of you. I've been in many a factory in my time, and I ought to. I started when I was twelve. I've always said it would be far better for every one if the proprietors could be obliged to make some provision for those of their men who can no longer work. You all know already

what happens when there is no compulsion—disabled, knotted hands and an empty belly."

"I, with fewer years," rumbled another voice, "have still more experience. Let us take unanimous action, keep our secret and spoil their material, their tools, their everything and anything, what you will. We can, without danger to ourselves, make them lose time; we can found their metals badly, weave their materials worse. In a single year there won't be a factory in Spain with a peseta's credit——"

"No!" shouted a third voice in a raw tone. "Nor a workman with bread!" "The eight-hour day! Give us the eight-hour day!" roared a brawny chorus.

"Good counsel—to be dogs eight hours instead of nine, eh!"

"Raise the pay! Make 'em come up wi' the union scale!"

"And have them also raise the cost of clothes, bread, houses, if they can—until they tax the air we breathe!"

The bootless squabble might have gone on until dawn had not a voice, until then silent, broken sharply into the discussion. It was a huge voice, a roar that impeached the little, wizened body from which it poured full-throated, a voice that thundered an indomitable will in spite of its owner's size.

"We haven't come here to squabble, but to avenge a cruel wrong!" it bellowed. "Have you nerve enough? Yes or no? —answer me! I know where there are three dynamite cartridges, weighing from five to six pounds apiece. One we can use on the model shop, which is what they value most; another on the owner's house—in the rear, where the family generally is; the last one we can hold in reserve, in case one of the others should not explode properly. We can draw lots for the chance, and whoever pulls the black straw does the job!"

A prolonged silence greeted the cold-blooded, horrible proposition of wholesale murder and arson. Some were held back by the pure horror of the proposal, others by the fear of punishment. In the spirit all were accomplices before the fact, but the flesh was very weak; no one said: "I will dare it."

Gasparon was quickly on his feet, took a couple of pulls at his cigarette, walked over to stand under the lamp, so that they could read in his face the firmness of his resolution, and spoke plainly to the plotters.

"This is either all nonsense or all infamy. A 'Widows and Orphans' Fund' or pensions for them, with money? You are dreaming! A strike? What for?—to stumble and fall upon your faces for weakness when there is nothing left in the house to eat? To stay in pawn to your very last rag until obliged by hunger to return to work, at the owner's terms? The proposition of the dynamite is the savagery of a coward!—for my part I will not

assassinate anybody! Leave the vengeance to me. I will see that it is ample and not easily to be forgotten."

Some of the men murmured in surly disapproval, and others accepted the big fellow's proposal with good grace. The pusillanimous for fear, and the more exalted because they all saw in Gasparon's eyes something tremendous and mysterious, agreed to his undivulged plan, and the meeting was dissolved like one of those passing summer thunder showers whose bolt is not shot.

The day following Gasparon posted himself on the street to beg, directly in front of the palatial residence of the factory-owner. Supplications, threats, offers of all sorts to get him to go away were in vain. There he remained. He was there when the rich man, new lord of the modern feudality, came out to go to his work, to the exchange, to his varied amusements; when the señora, his lady wife, returned to pray; and when the children, the fair daughters of the house, went out to balls and parties, dressed in their daintiest shimmering frocks. There he stayed, close to the grating of gilded ironwork tracery about a window through which the ample silk curtains blew in soft folds. There he could be seen from dawn to dusk, showing his mutilated stump of an arm, resting the ragged bulk of his great body against the marble façade of the building, and always wearing about his neck, fastened by a cord, a neat little printed sign, bearing this inscription: *Crippled and Rendered Useless in the Factory of Don Martin Peñalva.*

VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

1867–1928

THE CONDEMNED

FOURTEEN months had Rafael spent in his narrow cell.

For his world he had those four walls of dismal bone white, all the cracks and crannies of which he knew by heart; his sun was the little window high up, crossed by bars that cut the blue strip of sky; and as to the floor of scarce eight paces, barely half was his, due to that clanking and degrading chain, the ring of which, biting into his ankle, had almost become part of his flesh.

He was condemned to death, and whilst the documents of his case were being examined in Madrid for the last time, he lay there for months and months buried alive, decaying like a living corpse in that coffin of mortar, desiring, as a momentary evil which would put an end to other greater ones, that the hour would speedily come for the garrote to close round his neck and finish everything once and for all.

What troubled him most was the cleanliness; that floor swept every day and well scrubbed, so that the damp, rising through the folding bed, got into his bones; those walls, on which not a speck of dust was allowed. Even the companionship of the dirt was denied the prisoner. Complete solitude. If rats could get in there, he would have the consolation of sharing with them his scanty meal and talking to them like good companions; if he had found a spider in a corner he would have amused himself by taming it.

In that sepulchre they did not want any other life but his. One day, how well Rafael remembered it! a sparrow peeped in at the window like a naughty child. The bohemian of light and space chirped as though expressing the surprise it felt to look down upon that yellow and emaciated being, shivering with cold in the height of summer, a few handkerchiefs knotted round his brow and a ragged blanket girt about his loins. It must have been shocked by that sunken and pallid face, with the whiteness of papier mâché; it was frightened by that strange Red-Indian dress, and fled, shaking its feathers as though to free itself from the tomb-like stench rising from the grating.

The only sound of life came from his companions in gaol as they

exercised in the yard. They at least saw the open sky over their heads, and did not breathe the air through a loophole; their legs were free and they had some one to talk to. Even in prison there are degrees of misfortune. Rafael did not understand man's eternal discontent. He envied the prisoners in the yard, considering their situation most desirable; they envied those outside, enjoying liberty; and those then walking in the streets were perhaps discontented, yearning for the unattainable! . . . How sweet is liberty! . . . They deserved to be in prison.

He was on the last rung of misfortune. He had tried to escape by tunnelling the ground in a fit of desperation, and the vigilance of the guards weighed on him, incessant and oppressive. If he sang, they imposed silence. He tried to amuse himself by reciting in a monotonous chant the parts he remembered of the prayers his mother taught him, and they made him stop. "Are you pretending to be mad? Well, then, keep quiet!" They wanted to keep him whole, sound in body and mind, so that the executioner would not have to operate on damaged flesh.

Mad! he did not want to be; but the confinement, the inability to move, and the bad and scanty rations were finishing him. He had hallucinations; some nights when he closed his eyes, wearied by the regulation light to which he could not become accustomed even after fourteen months, he was tormented by the extravagant idea that while he slept his enemies, those people who wanted to kill him but were quite unknown to him, had turned his stomach inside out, and were tormenting him with cruel stabs.

In the daytime he was constantly thinking of his past, but his mind wandered and it seemed he was reviewing the story of another.

He remembered his return to the little town of his birth, after his first spell in prison for wounding; his fame throughout the district, the people at the tavern in the plaza admiring him enthusiastically: *What a great Brute Rafael is!* The best girl in the town decided to become his wife, more from fear and respect than from love; the people at the Town Hall flattered him, giving him a rural guard's rifle, and inciting his brutality as a weapon at the elections; he reigned unopposed throughout the parish; he held *the others*, those of the fallen band, in his grip, until they, becoming tired, took shelter behind a certain bully who just then came out of prison, and pitted him against Rafael.

Heavens! his professional honour was in danger: he must settle that bully who was robbing him of his bread. And, as an inevitable consequence, came the ambush, the deadly shot and the finishing blows with the butt to stop his cries and kicks.

In fact . . . the usual thing! And in the end came the gaol, where he met some old companions; the trial, at which all who

formerly feared him took vengeance for the dread they had felt by giving evidence against him; the terrible sentence and those cursed fourteen months waiting the arrival from Madrid of the death which, judging by the time it was taking, was doubtless coming by cart.

He was not without courage. He thought of Juan Portela, of the handsome Francisco Esteban, of all those valiant outlaws whose escapades, narrated in verse, he had always listened to with enthusiasm, and he recognised that he possessed as much grit as they to face the final moment.

But some nights he sprang from the bed as though discharged by a hidden spring, making his chains sound with a dismal clang. He cried out like a child and immediately regretted it, endeavouring vainly to stifle his sobs. It was another being that shrieked within him; another being he had not known before, which was afraid and cried out constantly, calm only coming when he had swallowed half-a-dozen cups of that burning beverage of chicory which in prison they called coffee.

Of the old Rafael who wanted death to finish matters quickly, there only remained the outer shell. The new Rafael, born in that sepulchre, thought with terror how fourteen months had now gone by and the end must inevitably be near. Willingly would he agree to pass another fourteen months in that misery.

He became suspicious; he had a presentiment that destruction was approaching; he saw it on all sides: in the curious faces which looked through the grating in the door; in the chaplain of the prison, who now came every afternoon as though that fetid cell were the best place in which to chat and smoke a cigarette. Bad, very bad!

The questions could not be more disquieting. Was he a good Christian? Yes, Father. He respected the clergy, had never been wanting on that point; and as to the family, there was nothing to be said; all his people had gone to fight for the King, because the priest in the town told them to. And to show his Christianity, he drew from the rags that covered his chest a dirty greasy bundle of scapulars and medals.

Then the chaplain spoke to him of Christ, Who, although the Son of God, had found Himself in a position similar to his, and this comparison immensely pleased the poor devil. What an honour! . . . But although flattered by such a similarity, he wanted it to happen as late as possible.

The day came when the terrible news burst on him like a thunder-clap. In Madrid they had finished. Death was coming; and speedily, by telegraph.

When he was told by a warder that his wife, with the child born while he was in prison, had come to the gaol asking to see him,

he doubted no more. When *she* left home then the *thing* was upon him.

They talked to him of a reprieve and he clutched feverishly at this last hope of all unfortunates. Did not others get it? Why should not he? Moreover, it was no trouble to that good lady in Madrid to give him his life; it was simply a case of signing her name.

And to all the official grave-diggers who from curiosity or duty visited him—lawyers, chaplains, and reporters—he asked, with piteous entreaty, as though they could save him:

" What do you think, will she sign? "

Next day they would take him to his town, bound and guarded like a wild beast going to the slaughter-house. The executioner was already there with his tools. And at the door of the prison, waiting to see him as he left, was his wife, a buxom brunette, with full lips and meeting eyebrows, her spreading skirts emitting, as she moved, a pungent barn-like smell.

She seemed terrified at being there; in her stupefied look was numbness rather than pain, and only when remembering the baby at her breast did she shed a few tears.

" Sir! What a disgrace for the family! She knew he would end in that way. If only the child had not been born! "

The prison chaplain endeavoured to console her. Resignation: she could still find, when widowed, a man who would make her happier. This seemed to fire her, and she even spoke of her first lover, a good boy, who withdrew in fear of Rafael and now often approached her in the town and in the fields as though he had something to tell her.

" No, there are plenty of men," she said quietly with an attempt at a smile. " But I am very Christian; and if I take another man, I want it to be as God wills."

And noticing the astonished look on the faces of the priest and doorkeepers, she came back to reality, and continued her difficult weeping.

As night fell the news came. Yes, she had signed. That lady, whom Rafael pictured in Madrid with all the splendours and adornments of the eternal Father's altars, yielding to telegrams and prayers, had prolonged the life of the condemned man.

The reprieve caused a tremendous commotion in the gaol, as though each of the prisoners had received a free pardon.

" Rejoice, woman," said the chaplain at the doorway, to the wife of the reprieved man. " They are not going to kill your husband: you will not be widowed."

The girl remained silent, as though struggling with ideas which developed slowly in her brain.

" Very well," she said at last with calmness, " and when will he come out? "

"Come out! . . . Are you mad? Never! He must be satisfied that his life has been spared. They will send him to Africa, and as he is young and strong, he may live for another twenty years."

For the first time the woman really cried with all her heart; and she did not shed tears of sorrow, but of desperation and rage.

"Come, woman," said the chaplain, irritated. "You are tempting Providence. They have spared his life, do you understand? He is no longer condemned to death. . . . And still you complain?"

The girl stopped crying. Her eyes shone with an expression of hate.

"Very well: let him live. . . . I'm glad. *He* is saved, but . . . what about me? . . ."

And after a long pause she added between sobs that shook her dusky body, ardent and of such brutal fragrance:

"And now . . . I am condemned."

VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

EVE AND THE POOR

With hungry gaze fixed on the rice boiling for the evening meal, the reapers sat listening to old Correchola, their shaggy, raw-boned leader. Their ruddy faces, bronzed by the sun, shone in the firelight, and the air of the kitchen was heavy with the scent of bodies weary with the toil of the fields; while through the open door of the farm-house, beneath a sky of violet hue, in which the stars were just beginning to peep forth, could be seen the fields, dim and indistinct in the gathering darkness, some already harvested, the hard surface cracked by the heat of the day, others with waving mantles of grain trembling beneath the first sighs of the evening breeze.

Groaning over his aching bones and the hard lot of those who toil, the old fellow finally exclaimed:

"But it is all the fault of Eve, the first woman. My grandmother told me that long ago, and it is too late to mend matters now. The poor will always be the victims of the rich, and we can only submit to our fate."

Then, seeing that his fellow-labourers indicated a desire to know more of this new charge against Mother Eve, old Correchola began, in his picturesque Valencian dialect, to tell of the shabby trick played on the poor of the world by the first of womankind.

"The story goes back to a time not long after the expulsion of the erring pair from Paradise, condemned to earn their bread by the toil of their hands. Adam's days were given up to the digging of the soil and worrying about his crops; Eve spent her time pluming herself in the door of their hut, and with every year came more mouths to feed until the poor father was in despair.

"From time to time there flitted by one seraph or another, who had come to take a glance at the world that he might tell his Lord how things were going here below since the first sin.

"'Child! Little one!' Eve would then cry with her sweetest smile. 'Dost thou come from above? How is it with our Lord? When thou returnest, tell Him that I have repented of my disobedience. Ah, how happily we lived in Paradise! Tell Him that we toil diligently and that our one desire is again to see His face and to know that He is no longer angry.'

" ' What thou askest shall be done,' answered the seraph, and spreading his wings he was soon lost to sight among the clouds.

" Messages of this sort were repeated at intervals, but brought forth no response. The Lord remained invisible, engrossed in the mighty affairs of the universe. But one day a gossip from the heavenly regions—for even in those days there were such things—stopped before the cottage, and seeing Eve, called out:

" ' Listen, Eve, if it is pleasant this afternoon, it is possible that the Lord may descend for a brief time. Last night as He was talking to the Archangel Michael I heard Him say, " What has become of the banished ones? " '

" Eve was overwhelmed at the possibility of this great honour. She cried loudly to Adam, who, as usual, was bending over his work in an adjacent field. Then what a commotion arose! Eve swept the house from top to bottom, put a brand new coverlet on the bed, scrubbed the chairs with soap and sand, and then, bethinking herself of personal neatness, donned her best skirt and decked Adam out in a fig-leaf jacket that she had made for his Sunday wear. She was just thinking that everything was ready when her attention was attracted by the crying of her twenty or thirty children. And what an unkempt brood to receive the Omnipotent, with their tangled hair and dirty faces!

" ' How can I let this rabble be seen! ' she cried. ' The Lord will say that I am a careless woman, a bad mother. Men do not know what it is to struggle with such a family! ' After much hesitation she selected her favourites, washed the three prettiest, and drove the rest of the squalid troop off to the stable, where she locked them in despite their cries.

" And it was high time that all was ready. A gleaming white cloud was descending on the horizon and the air was filled with the sound of wings and the melody of a chorus which lost itself in the infinite distance, repeating in mystic monotone, ' Hosannah! Hosannah! ' Soon the heavenly band reached the ground and advanced along the way in such resplendent glory that it seemed as if all the stars of Heaven had come down to pass between those fields of grain. First came a group of archangels as a guard of honour. These, sheathing their fiery swords, quickly passed the house, with courteous greetings to Eve, and then with soldierly freedom dispersed among the fig trees, while Adam muttered curses under his breath and gave up his crop for lost. Then came the Lord, His beard of shining silver, and on His head a flashing diadem brilliant as the sun, followed by St. Michael and all the attendants and dignitaries of the celestial court.

" The Lord greeted Adam with a kindly smile and spoke graciously to Eve, while the abashed pair, quite melted at His gentleness, offered Him their best arm-chair. And what a chair

that was for comfort! With its heavy frame and braided seat of the finest grass! Such a chair as the village priest might have! So now the Lord, sitting thus at ease, questioned Adam about his affairs, the state of his family, his daily labour, and other things.

" ' That is well,' He said to them. ' That is well. That will teach thee not to take thy wife's advice. Didst thou hope to have for ever the easy life of Paradise? Gnash thy teeth, My son, and toil and gain thy bread by the sweat of thy brow. Thus thou wilt learn not to rebel against thine elders.'

" But then, regretting His severity, He added in gentle tones:

" ' What is done is done, and My curse must be fulfilled. My word cannot be changed. But as I have entered this house, I will not leave it without some token of kindness. Eve, bring thou those little ones to Me.'

" The three little ragamuffins arranged themselves in line before the Omnipotent, who looked at them fixedly for a time.

" ' Thou,' He said to the first one, a solemn, pudgy youth, who listened scowlingly, with his chin resting on his hand, ' thou shalt be charged with judging thy fellow-man. Thou shalt make the laws and shalt say what is right and what is crime, changing thine opinion whenever thou wilt, and thou shalt subject all evil-doers to the same rule, which is even as a physician doth cure all ills by the one medicament.'

" Then He pointed to the next, a lively, dark-skinned lad, always with club in hand, ready to beat his brothers.

" ' Thou shalt be a warrior, a chieftain. Thou shalt lead men like sheep to the slaughter, and yet they shall sing thy praises. The people, when they see thee covered with thy fellows' blood, shall gaze upon thee in admiration as at a demi-god. If others kill, they shall be murderers: if thou killest, thou shalt be proclaimed as a hero; cause the fields to run red with blood; lay waste the towns with fire and sword; destroy and kill; and poets shall sing of thee and historians shall record thy deeds. Others than thou who do these things shall be cast into chains.'

" Reflecting for a moment, He turned to the third: ' Thou shalt gather the wealth of the world. Thou shalt loan money to kings and princes and shalt treat them as thine equals; and if thou ruinest an entire people, the world shall wonder at thy genius.'

" Poor Adam was weeping for joy and gratitude, while Eve, anxious and trembling, strove to speak but could not, for in her mother's heart remorse was busy and she was thinking of the poor little ones locked in the stable who were to be for ever debarred from these mercies.

" ' I am going to bring them to Him,' she said in an undertone to Adam, but Adam, ever timid, objected, murmuring: ' It would be too great a presumption. The Lord will be displeased.'

" Just at this moment the Archangel Michael, who had come much against his will to the abode of the outcasts, ventured to remind his Master of the passing time and the need of haste. The Lord arose and the archangel escort came hurrying back to attend Him on His way. But Eve, impelled by her remorse, ran quickly to the stable and threw open the door. ' Lord,' she cried, ' behold, here are yet others. Some gift, I pray thee, for these poor ones! '

" The Almighty looked with surprise at the filthy crowd playing in the dirt of the stable.

" ' There is nothing left to give,' He said. ' Their brothers have taken all. However, woman, I will reflect and later we shall see.'

" St. Michael pushed Eve aside, urging her to importune the Master no further, but she pursued Him with her supplications:

" ' Something, O Lord, something for these poor ones, I pray! Else what shall they do in the world? '

" The Lord, already on the threshold, turned for a moment.

" ' They have their destiny,' He said. ' They shall be charged with serving and supporting the others.'

" And from those unhappy creatures whom our first mother hid in the stable," concluded the old harvester, " are we descended —we who, with bended back, wrest our scanty living from the soil—we, the poor of the earth."

VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

THE TOMB OF ALI-BELLUS

At that time (said the sculptor Garcia), in order to pay for my daily bread, I passed a good part of my time restoring images in the churches and gilding altars, and in pursuit of this work I travelled over the entire province.

Once I received an important commission: to restore the great altar in the church of Bellus, which work was to be paid for by a legacy left by an old lady, and thither I betook myself with my two apprentices, who were not much younger than I was.

We boarded in the house of the priest, a gentleman who was absolutely incapable of remaining quiet for any length of time; hardly had he finished saying mass when he would saddle his mule and go off to visit the priest of some neighbouring parish, or he would take his shot-gun and game-bag and attempt to depopulate the country of birds. While he was thus vagabonding, I and my two companions were perched upon the scaffolding erected in front of the altar, touching up and regilding this complicated piece of work of the seventeenth century and putting new wings and noses on the whole group of angels.

In the morning, when mass had been said, we were left absolutely alone. The church was an ancient one, a huge building, with white-washed walls and small chapels under arches extending along the sides. It had that peculiar atmosphere of silence and beauty combined which we find in all buildings constructed in the Arabic style of architecture. Through the open door we could get a glimpse of the solitary square in front of the church, flooded with sunlight; we could hear the cries of people calling to each other in the fields beyond; sometimes a lot of chickens would very irreverently enter the temple, walking around the altar with a look of solemn admiration, until they were frightened away by our songs. I must tell you that, familiar with this kind of work, we acted in the church as we would in the studio, and I gratified all this crowd of Saints, virgins, and angels, covered with the dust of centuries, with all the songs I had learned at the theatres, when I occupied a seat in the top gallery. Sometimes I gave them *Aïda*, and again I favoured them with some voluptuous refrains from *Faust*.

Possibly on this account some of the neighbours drifted into the

church every afternoon, a lot of gossiping old women who had nothing better to do than watch our work; and sometimes they went so far as to dare criticise because I didn't put enough vermillion on the cheek of some lost angel. The best-looking and doubtless the richest of the lot, to judge by the authority she seemed to exercise over the others, would sometimes come up on the scaffold, doubtless to impress me with her superiority, standing in such a way that I couldn't move without almost falling over her.

The floor of the church was composed of large slabs of stone, and in the middle of it was a large circular stone in the centre of which was a rusty iron ring. One afternoon I was standing on this stone and wondering what there might be beneath it. As I was stooping down and trying to lift the ring from its socket, the same woman—whose name, by the way, was Pascuala—came in and seemed to be extraordinarily astonished at seeing me in this position.

That whole afternoon she passed on the scaffold, paying no attention to her companions below, but looking at me sharply in a way which indicated that she wished to ask me a question. Finally the question came. She desired to know what I was doing on that stone, which had never been known to have been lifted within the memory of man. I denied having lifted it, but my denials seemed only to excite her curiosity the more, and feeling a boyish desire to hoax her, I managed to arrange it so that every afternoon when she entered the church she found me standing on that stone and examining it closely. The work came to an end, and we took down the scaffolding; the altar shone like a sun of gold, and just as I was about to leave the church the woman, devoured by curiosity, made another attempt to get at what she called my secret.

"If you only tell me, Mr. Painter," she said supplicatingly, "I will keep the secret."

And the painter—for this is what they called me—as he was young and of a somewhat mischievous disposition, and especially as he was going to leave that part of the country within an hour, forthwith whispered to the lady the most absurd fairy tale. I made her promise at least twenty-five times not to whisper a word of what I was about to say, and then I told her a series of lies as quickly as I could manufacture them, drawing from the most interesting novels I had ever read. I told her that I had lifted the stone by means of a mysterious force of which I alone knew the secret, and that beneath it I had seen the most extraordinary things. First I had encountered a long, steep staircase leading into the bowels of the earth; then I had come upon a number of passages leading in all directions. From one of them there came a faint light, and following this I came to a large room in which burned a lamp of antique form, which had been burning for a thousand years. In the centre of this room, lying upon a couch of marble, was a large

man. He had a long grey beard, his eyes were closed, and beside him there was an enormous sword; on his head was a turban in which glittered the Moorish half-moon of gold and diamonds.

"It is a Moor!" she interrupted.

Yes, a Moor. How wonderfully bright she was to have discovered it! I went on to say that he was wrapped in a mantle that shone like gold, and on the marble were certain inscriptions in a strange language which even the priest himself could not read; but I, being a painter, and painters know everything, I had deciphered it without the slightest difficulty. The meaning was—was—ahem, "Here lies Ali-Bellus: this tomb is dedicated to him by Sarah, his wife, and Macael, his son."

One month later when I was in the city of Valencia I found out what had occurred in that good little town after I left it. Pascuala at once informed her husband, who the next day repeated the entire story at the tavern. General stupefaction! To think they had lived all their lives in that town, had been to that church every Sunday and did not know that just beneath their feet there lay the man with the long beard, the great sword, and the turban! And then to think that it was the great Ali-Bellus, who had a wife by the name of Sarah and a son by the name of Macael, and who had undoubtedly founded the town! And all this had been seen by a stranger, who had been there but a few days, while not one of them had even suspected it!

The following Sunday, after the priest had left the little town to go and dine with one of his friends, a large part of the population rushed back to the church. The husband of Pascuala succeeded in getting the sexton to surrender the key, and all, even the mayor and the secretary, entered the church, armed with pickaxes, crowbars, and ropes. How they did sweat! That stone had certainly not been moved in three centuries. The strongest of them used every effort, but for an hour the stone did not move the fraction of an inch.

"Courage, courage!" yelled Pascuala. "Remember that beneath that stone is the Moor!"

Encouraged by her, they redoubled their efforts, and after another hour's work they managed to pull up not only the stone but the greater part of the floor of the church. One would have thought that the whole edifice was coming down, but little they cared about that! All looks were fixed upon the yawning hole before them. The boldest scratched their heads with evident indecision; but one, more courageous than the others, finally caused a rope to be tied around his waist, and, murmuring a prayer, they lowered him down while all held their breaths. That lowering didn't tire them very much, for the man's feet were on bottom even while his head was outside.

" What do you see? " they yelled in chorus.

He was moving all around that pit, feeling with his hands, without finding anything but four solid walls and a few heaps of rotten straw.

" Look around! Search! " screamed those who were gathered closely about the edge of the hole. But the investigator could find nothing but the four walls of this narrow pit and the rotten straw. He climbed out and others took his place, accusing the first one of being stupid, but finally all were convinced that there was nothing there but a hole about six feet square. To say that they were angry would be to put it very mildly. They simply raved. The women took occasion to revenge themselves upon Pascuala, who had lorded it over them for so many years. Their misfortunes reached their climax, however, when the priest returned. Seeing the floor of the church and hearing the story of what had happened, he declared that he would excommunicate all the inhabitants of the town and close the church, and was only calmed when the daring discoverers of Ali-Bellus promised to construct a better floor at their own expense.

" Did you ever go back there again? " one of those present asked the sculptor.

" You couldn't hire me to. More than once I have met some of the inhabitants of this town in the city of Valencia, and, strange to say, when they spoke to me about the hoax they laughed and thought it a wonderfully good joke. They all assured me that they were not among those who had gone into the church, for they had suspected the trick from the beginning. They always terminated the conversation by inviting me to come down and visit them and have a good time. They smiled angelically when they gave me this invitation, but there was a certain gleam in their eyes that gave me to understand that the town would probably be the unhealthiest place for me on earth."

RUBÉN DARÍO

1867–1916

THE BOURGEOIS KING

FRIEND! The sky is dark, the air cold, the day sad. A merry story. . . . Just to brush aside grey and misty melancholy. Here it is:

. . . . . .

There was once in an immense and brilliant city a very powerful King, who had rich and fanciful garments, naked slaves both black and white, long-maned horses, glittering weapons, fleet greyhounds, and beaters with brass horns, that filled the air with their fanfaronade. Was he a Poet King? No, my friend: he was the Bourgeois King.

. . . . . .

This sovereign was very fond of art and gave largess freely to his musicians, to his composers of dithyrambs, painters, sculptors, apothecaries, barbers and fencing masters.

When he used to go to the forest, beside, a wounded and bleeding deer or wild-boar, he would make his rhetoricians improvise allusive verses, while the servants filled the goblets with the golden wine that sparkles, and the women clapped their hands with elegant and rhythmic motion. He was the king of all, in his Babylon of music, of laughter and the noise of feasting. When he tired of the madding city, he went to the chase, deafening the wood with his throng; and the frightened birds flew from their nests and the babel echoed through the deepest caves. The fleet-footed dogs broke through the brush in wild career, and the huntsmen, bending over the necks of their horses, let their purple cloaks wave in the air, their faces flushed and their hair flying.

. . . . . .

The King possessed a superb palace where he had accumulated riches and marvellous works of art. He reached it through masses of lilies and extensive ponds, saluted first by the white-necked swans, then by the haughty flunkeys. Good taste! He went up steps flanked by columns of alabaster and smaragdine, guarded on either side by marble lions, like the thrones of Solomon. Refinement! Besides the swans, he had a vast aviary, as became a lover

of the music of cooing and singing birds; and next to it he broadened his mind, reading novels by M. Ohnet, or beautiful books on grammatical questions, or Hermosillan criticisms. Yes; he was a staunch defender of academic correctness in letters, and of the furniture style in art; a sublime mind, a lover of polish and orthography.

. . . . . .

Eastern fancies! for ostentation and nothing more. It was an easy thing for him to have a salon worthy of the taste of a Goncourt and of the millions of a Croesus; chimeric creatures of bronze with open maws and twisted tails, in wondrous and fantastic groups; lacquers from Kioto inlaid with the leaves and branches of a monstrous flora, and animals of an unknown fauna; butterflies with strange-coloured wings on the walls; coloured roosters and fishes; masks with horrible expressions and eyes that seemed to see; halberds with blades of great antiquity, and handles carved with dragons devouring the lotus; in egg-shells, cloaks of yellow silk, as of woven spiders' thread, ornamented with red herons and green rice plants; vases and porcelains centuries old, of the kind painted with warriors of Tartary, half-clad in a single skin, holding stretched bows and quivers of arrows.

For the rest there was the Greek room, filled with marbles; goddesses, muses, nymphs, and satyrs; the room of the gallant period, with paintings by the great Watteau and by Chardin; two, three, four, how many more rooms!

And Maecenas walked through them all, his face reflecting a certain majesty, his stomach happy and the crown on his head, like a king of diamonds.

. . . . . .

One day as he was seated on his throne, surrounded by courtiers, rhetoricians, and masters of riding and dancing, they brought him a queer specimen of a man.

" What is that? " he asked. " Sire, it is a poet."

The King had swans on his pond, canaries, sparrows, not to say many rare birds, in his aviary: a poet was something new and strange. " Bring him here."

And the poet: " Sire, I am starving."

And the King:

" Speak, and you shall eat."

He began: " Sire, long have I sung of the things that are to be. I have spread my wings to the hurricane, I came to the world in the dawn: I seek for the chosen race that is to wait, a hymn on the lips and a lyre in the hand, for the rising of the great sun. I have abandoned the inspirations of the corrupt city, of the perfumed chamber, of the muse of the flesh that belittles the soul and powders the face. I have broken the flattering harps of the weak against the goblets of Bohemia and the jars where foams the wine that in-

toxicates but strengthens not; I have cast aside the cloak that made me seem an actor, or a woman, and I have dressed myself in a savage and splendid style: my rags are regal. I have gone to the virgin forest, where I have been strengthened and fed with the milk of nutriment and the liquor of a new life; and by the edge of the angry sea, tossing my head in the black and mighty tempest, like a commanding angel, or an Olympian demigod, I have given myself to iambics and deserted the madrigal.

" I have embraced Nature in her grandeur, and have sought in the warmth of the Ideal, the verse in the star in heaven on high, and the verse in the pearl in the ocean below. I have desired strength! Because the time of great upheavals is at hand, with a Messiah all light, all energy and power, and it becomes us to receive His spirit with a triumphal arch of poetry, with stanzas of steel, with stanzas of gold, with stanzas of love.

" Sire! Art is not in the cold casings of marble, nor in the highly finished painting, nor in the great M. Ohnet! Sire! Art does not clothe itself in trousers, or talk in bourgeois, or dot all its i's. Art is magnificent, it has cloaks of gold, or of fire, or it goes naked; it mixes the clay with inspiration, and paints with light; it is powerful, and strikes with its wings like the eagle, or with its paw like the lion. Sire, between an Apollo and a goose, choose the Apollo, although one be made of baked clay and the other of ivory."

" Oh! Poetry! "

" Well! Rhymes are prostituted, verses are made to the beauty spots of women, and poetic syrups are manufactured. And, sire, the bootmaker criticises my hendecasyllables, and the master of chemistry corrects my inspiration. Sire, it is you who authorise all this. . . . The ideal, the ideal. . . ."

The King interrupted:

" You have heard him. What is to be done? "

And a philosopher of that mode:

" If you will permit, sire, he can earn his bread by playing an organ; we can put him in the gardens, near the swans, and he can play when you are walking there."

" Yes," said the King; and addressing the poet: " You shall turn a handle. You shall keep silent. You shall play an organ that will give out valses, quadrilles, and two-steps, unless you prefer to die of hunger. A piece of music for a piece of bread. No gibberish about ideals. " Go! " And from that day onwards, by the edge of the pond where lived the swans, the starving poet could be seen turning the handle; tiriririn; tiriririn . . . ashamed in the sight of the great sun! Did the King pass by? Tiriririn, tiriririn! . . . Did his stomach feel empty? Tiriririn! And this, amid the mocking of the free birds that came to drink the dew

from the lilies; amid the buzzing of the bees that stung his face and filled his eyes with tears . . . bitter tears than ran down his cheeks and fell on the hardened ground!

And winter came, and the poor poet felt numbed with cold in body and soul. His brain seemed petrified, and he thought no more of his grand verses; the poet of the mountain crowned with eagles was now nothing but a poor devil turning the handle of an organ: tiririrín!

And when the snow fell he was forgotten by the King and his subjects; the birds were sheltered, but he was left in the icy air that gripped his body and lashed his face.

And one night when the snow from above was falling in crystallised flakes, there was a feast in the palace, and the light from the sconces danced merrily on the marble, on the gold, and on the robes of the mandarins in the old porcelains. And frenzied applause was given to the toast of the professor of rhetoric, teeming with dactyls, anapæsts and pyrrhics, while the champagne sparkled in the crystal glasses, with its clear and fleeting bubbles. A winter's night, a night of festivity! And the poor devil, covered by the snow, near the pond, turned the handle of the organ to warm himself, shivering and stiff from the cold, reviled by the north wind on the frozen and merciless mantle of snow, in the darkness of night, the mad music of two-step and quadrille floating among the leafless trees; and he died, thinking that the sun would rise next day and with it the Ideal . . . and that Art would not be dressed in trousers, but in a cloak of fire, or of gold. . . . Until the King and his courtiers found him next day, the poor luckless poet, like a sparrow killed by the frost, with a bitter smile on his lips, and his hand still holding the handle.

. . . . . .

Oh, my friend! The sky is dark, the air is cold, the day sad. There is grey and misty melancholy about. . . . But, how the soul is comforted by a timely word or a hand-shake! Au revoir.

RUBÉN DARÍO

THE WATER NYMPH

We were seated round the table, just six of us, in the Château newly bought by Lesbia, the capricious and untamable little actress whose extravagances were then on every lip. Our Aspasia presided, and at the moment held between her pink fingers a moist lump of sugar, which she was sucking with childish pleasure. We had reached the liqueurs. The table glittered like a lake of precious stones, and the light of the flickering candles merged in the half-empty glasses, changing colour in the ruby Burgundy, the burning gold of the champagne, and the emerald depths of the crême de menthe.

We talked with the enthusiasm of respectable artists after a good dinner. We were all artists of varying degrees of importance, and there was also a fat scientist whose immaculate shirt-front was decorated by a monstrous cravat, tied in a large knot.

Some one said, "Yes, Fremiet!" And from Fremiet we passed to his animals, to his masterly chisel, to two bronze dogs that stood near by, one nosing the scent of the quarry, and the other gazing upwards, his thin tail rigid and erect, as though looking at the hunter. Who mentioned Myron? The scientist who recited Anacreon's epigram in Greek. "Drover, take your herd to graze afar, lest thinking Myron's cow alive, you want to take it with you."

Lesbia finished sucking the lump of sugar, and with a silvery laugh:

"Bah! I prefer the satyrs. I would like to give my bronzes life, and if possible, my lover should be one of those shaggy demi-gods. But even more than satyrs, I adore centaurs; and I would let myself be stolen by one of those monsters if only to hear my lover wail at my deceit, sadly playing on his flute."

The scientist interrupted: "Satyrs and fauns, hippocentaurs and syrens have existed like the salamanders and the Phoenix."

We all laughed; but above the chorus rose the voice, irresistible, charming, of Lesbia, her face flushed with the flush of beauty, radiant with happiness.

"Yes," continued the scientist, "what right have we to deny facts affirmed by the ancients? The gigantic dog, high as a man,

seen by Alexander, is as real as the kraken spider that lives in the depths of the sea. St. Anthony the Abbot, at the age of ninety, went in search of the old hermit Paul who lived in a cave. Lesbia, don't laugh. The saint was walking through the desert, leaning on his staff, and wondering where he would find the man he sought. After walking for a long time, do you know who told him the direction he was to take? A centaur, 'half man and half horse,' says the author. He spoke as though annoyed, and fled so rapidly that the saint soon lost sight of him; he galloped away with his hair flowing and his body nearly grazing the ground. During the same journey St. Anthony saw a satyr, a little man of strange appearance, standing near a streamlet; he had a hook nose, a rough and wrinkled forehead, and the lower part of his ill-formed body terminated with the hoofs of a goat."

"In fact," said Lesbia, "M. Cocureau, future member of the Institute!"

The scientist continued:

"It is affirmed by St. Jerome that in the time of Constantine the Great a live satyr was taken to Alexandria, and his body was preserved when he died. Moreover, he was seen by the Emperor in Antioch."

Lesbia had refilled her glass of crême de menthe, and was moistening her tongue in the green liqueur, like a kitten.

"It is said by Albertus Magnus that in his time two satyrs were captured in the mountains of Saxony. Enrico Zormano assures us that in Tartary there were men with only one leg, and one arm only on the chest. Vincencio in his time saw a monster that was brought to the King of France; it had a dog's head (Lesbia laughed). The thighs, arms, and hands were as hairless as ours (Lesbia wriggled in her chair like a ticklish child); it ate cooked meat, and drank wine willingly."

"Colombine!" called Lesbia. And Colombine came, a little lap-dog like a bundle of wool. Its mistress took it up, and amidst shouts of laughter from all:

"Take that! The monster was like you!" And she kissed it on the mouth, while the animal trembled and distended its little nostrils with excitement.

"And Filegon Traliano"—concluded the scientist finely—"asserts the existence of two kinds of hippocentaurs: one of them eats elephants."

"Enough of this wisdom," said Lesbia. And she finished her liqueur.

I was happy. I had not opened my lips. "Oh!" I exclaimed, "I prefer nymphs! I would like to watch those nudities of the woods and fountains, although, like Actæon, my dogs devoured me afterwards. But nymphs don't exist!"

That merry gathering broke up amid laughter and farewells.

"Well," said Lesbia, burning me with her fawn-like eyes, and lowering her voice as though speaking only to me, "nymphs do exist, and you shall see them."

. . . . . .

It was a spring day. I was wandering in the gardens of the castle, with the air of a confirmed dreamer. The sparrows were twittering on the fresh lilies and pecking at the beetles protected by their shells of emerald, by their breast-plates of gold and steel. Among the roses, carmine-coloured and vermilion, the penetrating odour of sweet perfumes; farther on, the violets, in large masses, with their soft colour and virgin odour. Beyond, the tall trees, the leafy branches harbouring a thousand bees, the statues in the half-shades, the bronze discobolus, the muscular gladiators in their superb gymnastic attitudes, the perfumed bowers hung with ivy, the porticoes, beautiful Ionic reproductions, caryatides all white and inviting, and vigorous telamones of the atlantean order, with broad backs and giant thighs. I was wandering in the labyrinth of these charms when I heard a noise, over there in the darkness of the wood, in the pond where live the swans—some so white that they seem carved in alabaster, others with half the neck as black as ebony, suggesting a black stocking on a white leg.

I moved nearer. Was I dreaming? No, never! I felt as you did when you first saw Egeria in her grotto.

In the centre of the pond, amongst the frightened swans, was a nymph, a real nymph, submerging her rose-coloured form in the crystal waters. Her hips above the water seemed at times gilded by the gentle light filtering through the leaves. It was a vision of lilies, roses, snow, and gold; I saw an ideal with life and form, and I heard above the gentle splashing of the broken waters a mocking and harmonious laugh that fired my blood.

Suddenly the vision fled, the nymph rose from the pond, like Cytherea on her wave, and gathering her hair, that shed diamonds in her path, she ran between the rose-bushes, beyond the lilies and violets, beyond the leafy trees, until she disappeared, alas, round a bend. and I was left: a lyric poet, a cheated faun, looking at the large alabaster swans which seemed to mock me as they stretched towards me their long necks, at the end of which glistened the agate green of their bills.

. . . . . .

Later, we were lunching together, the same friends of the previous evening, and among us, resplendent in his shirt-front and large black bow, the fat scientist, future member of the Institute.

And suddenly, whilst we were all talking of Fremiet's latest work in the Salon, Lesbia exclaimed in her merry Parisian voice: "Té! as Tartarin says, the poet has seen nymphs! . . ." All looked at her astonished, and she gazed at me, gazed at me like a cat, and laughed like a ticklish child.

RUBÉN DARÍO

THE BLUE BIRD

PARIS is a gay yet terrible place. Among the frequenters of the Café Plombier, painters, sculptors, authors, poets, yes, all aspiring to the old green laurel—good and plucky boys—no one was more beloved than poor Garcin; nearly always sad, a good absinthe drinker, a dreamer who was never drunk, and, like a true Bohemian, a fine improviser.

Among the drawings and sketches of future Delacroix that decorated the walls of the untidy little room where we had our merry meetings were verses, complete stanzas in the heavy sloping writing of our blue bird.

The blue bird was poor Garcin. You don't know why he was called by that name? Well, it was we who christened him.

It was not a mere whim. He was a sad drinker, and when we asked him why he frowned and stared at the ceiling, whilst we were all laughing like lunatics or like silly children, he replied with a rather bitter smile: "Comrades, it is because I have a blue bird in my head, and therefore . . ."

It also happened that he was very fond of visiting the country in the spring-time. The air of the woods was good for his lungs, so the poet used to tell us. When he returned from his excursions he always brought bunches of violets and sheaves of paper covered with madrigals, written to the rustling of the leaves under the cloudless sky. The violets were for Nini, his neighbour, a girl with fresh and rosy cheeks and eyes of the deepest blue. The verses were for us. We read them and applauded them. We all admired Garcin. He was a genius that would shine. His time would come. Oh, the blue bird would fly very high! Bravo! Good! Here, waiter, more absinthe.

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Garcin's principles:

Of flowers, the pretty bell-flower.

Of precious stones, the sapphire.

Of the immensities, the sky and love; that is to say, Nini's eyes.

And the poet often said: "I think neurosis is always better than dulness."

. . . . . .

At times Garcin was sadder than usual.

He would walk along the boulevards indifferent to the luxurious carriages, the well-dressed men, the beautiful women. When passing a jeweller's shop he would smile; but when he came to a bookshop, he approached the window and examined the contents eagerly; at the sight of the beautiful volumes he said he felt decidedly envious, and frowned; to relieve his feeling he would look at the sky and sigh. And then he would hurry to the café in search of us, nervous, excited; he would order his absinthe and say:

"Yes, caged in my head is a blue bird that wants its freedom. . . ."

. . . . . .

Some began to think his mind unhinged.

A brain specialist, on being consulted, said it was a case of special monomania. His pathological experience left no room for doubt.

Decidedly, poor Garcin was mad.

One day he received a letter from his father, an old cloth merchant in Normandy, which ran somewhat like this:

"I have heard about your mad behaviour in Paris. So long as you continue, you shan't have a *sou* from me. Come and keep my books in the shop, and when you have burnt your stupid writings, you lazy scamp, you can have my money."

This letter was read out in the Café Plombier.

"Will you go?" "Won't you go?" "Will you agree?" "Will you take any notice?"

Bravo, Garcin! He tore up the letter, and leaning out of the window, laughed loudly and improvised a few stanzas, which ended, if I remember rightly:

'Tis true I'm doomed to idleness,
Yet at my fate I do not gird,
So long as, caged within my brain,
Safe and secure is the Blue Bird!

. . . . . .

After that, Garcin's character underwent a change. He became talkative, took a dose of merriment, bought a new coat, and began a poem in terzets, entitled, naturally, "The Blue Bird."

Every evening at our meeting a fresh part of the work was read. It was excellent, sublime, extravagant. It pictured a very beautiful

sky, a very fresh landscape, a country conjured up as by the magic brush of Corot, children's faces showing among the flowers, Nini's eyes moist and large; and added to all, the good God who sends, flying over it all, a blue bird that, without knowing how or when, nests in the poet's head, where it remains a prisoner. When the bird wants to fly and spreads its wings and strikes the walls of his head, he casts his eyes heavenwards, puckers his forehead, and drinks absinthe with a little water, drawing the while at a cigarette. That is the poem.

One night Garcin came, laughing loudly, but yet very sad.

. . . . . .

His pretty neighbour had been carried to the graveyard.

"I have news for you! News! The last canto of my poem. Nini is dead. Spring comes and Nini goes. The violets can remain in the country. Now for the epilogue of my poem. The publishers do not even condescend to read my verses. You will very soon have to separate. The law of time. The epilogue must be entitled: *How the blue bird took wing to the blue skies.*

The middle of spring! The trees in bloom, the clouds pink in the morn and pale at eve; the gentle breeze that shakes the leaves and flutters the ribbons of the straw hats. Garcin did not go into the country. Here he comes, dressed in a new suit, to our beloved Café Plombier, pale, and smiling sadly.

"My friends, embrace me. Embrace me, all of you; bid me good-bye, with all your hearts . . . the blue bird is taking wing. . . ."

And poor Garcin wept, and wrung our hands hard and went away.

We all said: Garcin, the prodigal son, is going to his father in Normandy. Muses, farewell; farewell, Graces. Our poet has decided to measure cloth! Here! A glass to Garcin!

Pale, frightened, sorrowful, on the following day all the frequenters of the Café Plombier, who made such a noise in the untidy little room, stood in Garcin's lodgings. He was lying on the bed, on the blood-stained sheets, his head shattered by a bullet. On the pillow lay fragments of his brain. . . . Horrible!

When we had recovered from the shock, and were weeping over the body of our friend, we found on him the famous poem. On the last page he had written these words:

To-day, in the middle of spring, I have opened the door of the cage for the poor blue bird.

. . . . . .

Ah! Garcin, how many people are afflicted as you were.

JOSÉ FERNANDEZ BREMÓN

19TH CENTURY

THE CURSE OF TONGUES

I

NEVER shall I forget my old schoolmate and eccentric friend, Juan Claro.

He was a good student, laborious and painstaking, but exceedingly quarrelsome and taciturn, even to the extent of avoiding his class-mates. Later he became barbarously and offensively outspoken on all occasions. Since his hands were always ready and eager to back up his tongue, he had sooner or later measured strength with every student in college who believed himself capable of avenging Juan's stinging remarks by an appeal to fisticuffs.

His predilection for me was due to my toleration of what he called his " frankness." Juan really had many good qualities, and my enjoyment of his sagacity and the conviction that he was his own worst enemy and morally incapable of living in ordinary society made me seek his company and esteem him highly. His character was as opposite to most men's as it was possible to imagine. At last, after a more than usually stormy college career, he became involved during the last few weeks of his fourth year in a fight, which brought him before the disciplinary committee, and he was summarily dismissed from the university.

" Well, anyway," Juan said to me when it was all over, " I had the great satisfaction of telling the old bears how the professors' wives flirt with us and everybody else! "

Some years later we chanced to be riding together in the stage-coach to San Isidro, when another and a more curious phase of his trouble-making nature asserted itself in a most startling and unexpected manner. Just in front of us on the outside of the coach was a very pretty young woman accompanied by a rather grim-looking, old moustached fellow. Juan eyed first one and then the other, and finally managed in some way to attract the young woman's attention. For a few moments they cast sheep's eyes at each other, when Juan suddenly spoke to her escort.

" Pardon me, stranger, but is the young lady your wife? "

" What's that to you? " growled the old moustache fiercely.

"Nothing at all," retorted Juan, with a slow and dangerous smile, "but I cannot resist the pleasure of informing you that for some time now she has been eyeing me with a good deal of interest."

Everybody on top of the lumbering old vehicle gasped. We expected nothing less than a fight on the spot. Had the stranger thrown himself upon Juan there and then we could not have said a word, for the insult was so uncalled-for; but to our amazement he merely shouted vociferously to the driver to stop, clambered down himself, and took the young woman, now very pale and trembling, down after him, and handed Juan his card. Claro glanced at the pasteboard, laughed in the face of the old gentleman, and tore the card into bits. It was the business card of a dry-goods house, and the old fellow was a miserable shopkeeper instead of the soldier or man of the world we had thought him. Juan said afterward he was almost sorry he had said anything to him; it was a pity to waste powder, even in words, on a man beneath one's own station.

It was this same Juan, the incorrigible, who cried out in a loud, clear voice, before a roomful of friends, when told that his father was dead: "It's high time!"

The people about, of course, withdrew from him in horror, notwithstanding the old man's death had left Juan many times a millionaire. I was the only one left in the room to hear his better self express the genuine sorrow I knew he felt. After that it was long before I saw him again, only hearing occasionally that his old and unchecked habit of giving his thoughts a reckless tongue had grown into a positive infirmity. I had almost entirely forgotten the man, with his queer ways and his inexhaustible wealth, when one day I got a note from him. It ran as follows:

"DEAR LUIS—I give you two proofs of my confidence. The first is to ask you to do me a favour. I wish you to send me a servant. I must have one of good antecedents, and with the indispensable quality of being stone-deaf. The person with whom I have to live is a deaf-mute, so it would be well for the servant to be able to converse in the sign-manual, thus saving me the nuisance of teaching it. The essential thing is that he must be as deaf as a mud wall—I have two excellent dogs to guard the house, and their ears are all that can be desired.

"The second proof is that I save you the annoyance of a fruitless trip out here. Since my servants cannot hear nor know when any one calls, they open to nobody, and merely bring me in the letters and cards left by the postman under the gate. I shall read your reply with satisfaction.

"Your old friend and fellow-student, JUAN CLARO."

After attending to Juan's request, I heard no more from him for so long a time that I had again forgotten that my old friend was alive. Then one afternoon a stoutish man in deep black entered my office and made queer signs to me with his hands. For a moment I could not remember him, but at last I recollected that this must be the man I had sent out to the provinces in accordance with Juan's instructions in that curious letter. The poor fellow gesticulated quite uselessly at me, with his sprawling fingers wriggling in all directions like so many worms. My equally futile words pattered vainly against his granite tympanum, and we were as far apart as though walls separated us. At last, with a quick gesture which I took to mean patience, and a profound bow, he drew a folded paper from his coat pocket and laid it upon my table. It was another letter from Juan, and I read it with interest, the mute watching me narrowly as I took it up. The script was fine and close-written, and the sheets of manuscript were so numerous as to promise a longish bout at deciphering my friend's none too distinct hieroglyphics; so I settled back in my chair to read in comfort, little guessing what was coming.

II

" DEAR LUIS," the letter began, " you have been and are my only friend. You have many friendships, but I can do no less than make you my confidant, though I suppose I now occupy but a very small place in your affections. Nevertheless, I must recover what space I formerly held, and in order to do that satisfactorily, must, in some measure at least, explain away my former and more recent offences.

" Though you have, indeed, always remained my friend, your visits to me gradually became more and more irregular until they finally ceased altogether. All my other acquaintances had dropped me, and when you no longer came to me I began to wonder what it was that kept me friendless and alone, no matter where I was. I thought the matter over carefully and became convinced that since I had not mastered my old foolish habit of thinking aloud, it was mastering me, nay, had mastered me, to the extent that I found myself powerless to correct the fault. Well, to make a long story short, I bought a place out here in the country and shut myself up with a servant, thinking to become, like Descartes, an ascetic and lonely philosopher. But my man turned out a thief, and one day when we were talking about it he attempted to justify himself. He declared he had robbed the merchant who was his employer because the latter had entrusted him with all his secrets, though paying him a beggarly pittance as wages. ' As you think out loud, sir,' he finished up brazenly, ' I think you had better have only mutes for your servants in future.' I did not fully under-

stand what he meant, and forced the rascal to explain, which he did with the greatest reluctance.

" ' Well, sir, if you must know,' he said, ' you think out loud all day long, on every subject. You speak of the interest you get from the bankers, of how long it is since you had a bath, and whether you are clean enough to go one day more without taking one. You see I know all your most secret thoughts. I could tell you the names of your former mistresses, and the circumstances under which your mother died; just how much your father left you, and where and how it is invested and kept. I know that at the present moment you have right here in your pocket fifty thousand pesetas that came in this morning's mail from the bank; and you don't know what to do with such a sum in notes. My advice, respectfully offered, would be to put it in the bank at once.'

" The fellow's talk and his confession shook me up considerably, and I resolved to act on his advice. I saw at last that what had been a mere mannerism in my early youth had become a vice I could not control even in the most favourable circumstances. I was always making a noise wherever I went; it was the buzzing of my inmost thoughts, expressed verbally, though without my realising it. You can see how impossible it would be for me to live in society in close touch with my fellow-men. Every whimsical or serious notion or idea that popped into my head would just as surely pop out again in words. The more effort I made to suppress this grotesque yet dangerous failing the worse it became. It was as if the very fact of dwelling on it aggravated my disease. At last I gave up trying, and permitted myself full swing. Crimes, vice, the defects of beauties, the miseries of the rich and powerful, the evil qualities of any and all; noble, lewd, scientific, foolish, whimsical or serious thoughts dripped in words from my tongue like the slaver of a panting dog at noon.

" Of course, the first thing I did was to get rid of Francisco; the next, I wrote to an agency, and the following afternoon a mute presented himself, a white-haired and moustached old fellow who appeared very vigorous in spite of his years, and who proved active and serviceable. I thought he would do very well, but he had the grave fault of extreme curiosity, and many a time I caught him spying on me through the gate or window. Since the man could not talk, and it was too much of a nuisance to write out conversations with him on any ordinary and trivial subject, I purchased a number of good parrots and magpies to make my speechless life less burdensome. You may be sure they very soon developed an astonishing flow of conversation. One of them, my favourite because of his talkative powers and ability to carry on a genuine conversation, I called Nuño. You remember Nuño, don't you?

—the chap at college who was the wonder of the professors and the despair of dullards like myself for his ability to read a thing once and then reel it off by rote without the slightest effort?

" I could not, however, depend entirely upon my birds for amusement, so I used to sit out on my second-storey balcony every fine afternoon, watching the farmers in the distance and the people who occasionally passed by on the road. By twisting my neck a little I could see between the trees to the shoulder of the near-by cemetery. I had been sitting there for several weeks when I noticed a young woman, clad in deep mourning, come out of the postern gate of the cemetery and pass down the road to some point beyond my house. Her dress was modest and her face pretty enough. In Madrid, or any good-sized city, she would not have attracted the slightest attention; but here, on a lonely road, away in the country, she completely captivated me. ' Who can this unknown be? ' I wondered to myself every afternoon, as I sat hidden on the balcony, watching her pass. ' Can it be that a veteran like myself is to fall a victim to this simple country girl? ' I asked myself one afternoon as I was walking mechanically along the road down which she always disappeared. I turned to see if I could locate the exact spot where she vanished each day, and to my annoyance saw my servant trailing along a few paces in the rear.

" ' Idler! ' I said in the sign-manual, ' you were spying on me! '

" ' No, sir! ' he answered out loud and without repressing an evil smile. It annoyed me the more to feel that he could talk to me as he pleased, while I, because he was stone-deaf, had to use the slow and difficult signs. ' I wished to speak to you of the young lady who passes this way every afternoon.'

" ' Who is she? ' I asked, forgetting to reprimand him.

" ' Her name is Sofia,' he responded humbly. ' I saw you watched her with interest, so I ventured to set myself the task of finding out who and what she is. Her family is excellent and honourable, but now very poor. The girl herself is unmarried and virtuous; she lives with a sister of her father, who is employed in the country some miles away, but is too poor to support her properly. The girl has, however, one insurmountable defect—she is absolutely deaf and dumb, a perfect mute.'

" You can imagine how I felt when I heard that! I dismissed my man with a wave of the hand and walked on alone to think it over. Next day my decision was formed. I waited for her at the corner of the cemetery, with a blessed sense of security and confidence I had never known in my affairs with other women. For Sofia the mute I was a man without a fault. My hands would not stutter nor betray my secret thoughts; they could express

sensible ideas of love in a rational way. And my lips, talking their loudest, could never be hurtful to her. We should live together happily, and she need never know my miserable secret.

" The tongue of my fingers was laconic. A declaration in the usual roundabout terms of love would have been interminable and ridiculous, spelled out, so I simply signed to her with my hands: ' I love you. Will you make me happy—can we not be friends? I know your name and position. I live alone in that big house. Will you share it with me? '

" Anxiously I waited for her reply, which was some time in coming. At last she looked up at me with a faint smile and replied on her fingers:

" ' Friendship comes little by little. Love comes later, and sometimes never. I can only say to you that, deprived of all chance to mingle with the world, it is very pleasant to talk to you.'

" That was all I could get from her in the way of a promise that afternoon, though we talked rapidly in silence for an hour or more. She promised to come back every day. Eventually she accepted me, although I confessed my besetting weakness. I will not weary you, old friend, with the details of how I took every possible precaution to prevent myself from interrupting the ceremony by letting slip verbally what I thought of the fat priest, nor yet of how successfully I got through the ordeal. For once I managed without any bad mistakes, but the strain was terrible.

" Of course, we lived in Paradise for a while; but the sneaking, spying habits of my servant soon came to be worse than ever. I attributed the perpetual eye at the keyhole to the poor wretch's isolation, and bore with his fault as I could. But there came a day when I lost my temper completely. I found him peeping into the room where Sofia was dressing. I seized the wretch by the hair and shook him vigorously.

" To my horror the whole of the top of his head came off and dangled idly from my nerveless fingers. I shut my eyes, sick with fright. You know how powerful I am—I thought that in my rage I must have scalped him, without realising I was pulling so hard. It was some moments before I could pull myself together enough to look down at him, for I fully expected to see a raw and bloody skull. You can imagine my astonishment, and then my anger, when I tell you that I found myself looking at the closely-shaven black head of my former servant—Francisco, the thief.

" ' Pardon, master! ' he shrieked, falling on his knees, thoroughly frightened. ' Fidelity to you and yours made me adopt this deception. I could not bear to leave your service! '

" It was some moments before I got the better of my temper.

I did nothing rash, but, turning a deaf ear to Sofia, who had interceded for him, I ordered the sneaking scamp out of the house instantly, throwing his stuff after him. When he had at last cleared out, Sofia threw herself into my arms, weak and pale, with a terror I did not then understand, supposing it to be what any good woman would feel, and signed to me: ' You did well to get rid of him! He is dangerous—look out for him all the time! '

" This, contradicting her intercession for him, and Francisco's own interference in my love affair, filled me with horrible doubts. I began to watch her narrowly, without her suspecting it. I thought the thing over out loud, as usual, speculating on what he and she had done, how far each was culpable, to what extent I had been deceived, and so on. I saw that she wept almost all the time when I was not with her. When we were together she tried to be as bright and cheerful as ever, but under the strain her health, always delicate, began rapidly to fail, so rapidly, in fact, that I thought I could see a daily change for the worse. At last Blas, our baby, turned from the breast and beat upon it furiously with his tiny hands. It seemed to me symbolic that even her own child turned against her. I felt there could no longer be any doubt; but when, after convincing herself that she could no longer feed the little fellow, she crushed him feverishly to her heart and cried *out loud* in agonized tones, ' My son! Oh, my son! ' my own heart almost stopped beating.

" My wife able to talk! To hear! Not a mute at all! But even while I was wondering over it, she paled and swayed and slipped from her chair, white and silent, into my arms. She had been able to keep her deception without a single false step or slip through all the unusual vicissitudes of our five years of married life, until maternal love had wrenched her secret from her. I had been spied upon by a vile stratagem, an iniquitous deception. I had no doubt it was the work of Francisco, who had certainly profited in some way by the contemptible deceit. While these thoughts were surging through my brain and finding their echo on my running tongue, I turned to Sofia, who was regaining consciousness, ' They were after my money,' I concluded bitterly and aloud. ' She certainly had this man Francisco for a lover! God knows —Blas may not even be my child! '

" Sofia raised herself wearily on one arm and stared at me in a peculiar fashion for a full minute, silently, and I felt an uneasy sense of something about to happen.

" ' That man, Francisco,' she whispered unsteadily and with a groan, ' is my father! ' and she fainted again.

" I cannot begin to tell you how I felt at that moment, nor how strange, how impossible it seemed that I should be my own body-servant's son-in-law. I was too much dazed to realise anything

except that my suspicions of poor, consumptive Sofia had been unjust, and that my father-in-law, Don Francisco Lopez y Vivo, and my ex-body servant, Francisco Lopez, were one and the same person.

" ' I have had no designs upon your wretched money," ventured Sofia, when she had recovered her senses. ' On the contrary, I have saved you endless rage and worry regarding it. My father told me of your sad situation, and I quickly learned to pity you. It pained me deeply to see you walking past the house almost every day, talking incessantly to yourself in a clear, bold voice, pitched in a high, resonant key, passing from one thought to another with the greatest rapidity and inconsistency, and always alone, in spite of your youth, good looks, and money. From that first day when I learned your story—your habit had told the story thousands of times, so that my father knew it by heart—I did not cease to question my father about you unreservedly and with the most imprudent interest, as I now see.

" ' " It lies easily in your hands to be rich and the mistress of that great house," he said to me one day in a very mysterious manner. I had not an idea of what he meant at first, but when at last I did understand, the plan, which should have been repugnant to me, which ought to have disgusted and repelled me, seemed perfectly justifiable and right, and I accepted the opportunity by no means unwillingly. I saw myself at your side, able to comfort you, to help you to enjoy life—I fell in with my father's plans without reserve. You may not believe me, Juan, but I honestly believed I was doing right. I thought I realised what it would mean to you if I made my small sacrifice and gave up speech, the privilege of crying out in fear or joy, even my very voice itself, to bring a little temporary joy into your bleak and uncomfortable life. Perhaps I was wrong. God knows—I thought I was doing well, doing my very best, for you.

" ' Afterward I had to protect you from my father's covetousness, for he never could forget your money, and he craved it with an unholy lust. Yet I was able to control him by the threat of exposure. That was why I wept when you dismissed him; that was why I told you he was dangerous and would bear watching —but oh, he was and is my father just the same, and it nearly broke my heart to say it!

" ' I loved you at first, dearly. I love you yet. But you are only mortal, and you were far more yourself in thinking I could bear nothing than a man who knows his wife is his real other half. You never felt that way regarding me. Believing that my ears and tongue were both dead you gave your thoughts free rein, realising to the full your infirmity, and thinking aloud all day long, and sometimes far into the night. Not a day has gone

by but I have heard you talking to yourself, suspecting my disinterestedness, attributing to me the most odious of motives in marrying you. I have heard you roar with laughter as you joked to yourself over my simple ways. I have heard you recount your previous love affairs minutely in the most revolting terms, pass my various defects and faults in merciless review, complain of being tired of me, and dream eagerly of another and less monotonous life. Yet in spite of all this I managed to hold my peace.'

"I could not let her conclude her story. The gentle arraignment was more than I could bear. I endured torments during her brief recital. I saw myself pitifully unworthy such an unheard-of sacrifice. I remembered the many cruel, wicked things I would to God I had never said; and, ashamed before the woman who had so smilingly endured these five long and bitter years of hell for my sake, immured in a living death, I dropped on my knees before her, kissing that dear face with the profoundest pity, and even as I kissed her I heard myself crying out, to my own horror and disgust: . . . . . .

"'Francisco has married me to his daughter, who is an angel! I am my servant's son-in-law! But she will be dead of consumption by autumn!'

"It makes me sick to think of that even now, but it was said and I could not unsay it. Shortly after that, realising that it was not right for little Blas to be with me and hear all my wild talk, we sent him away to remain until he had attained years and knowledge of the world enough to come back to us without being permanently injured by being near me. With his departure Sofia's illness made terrible strides. One afternoon, when it cost me more effort than usual to carry her to her invalid's chair on the balcony, I capped all my previous crimes of cruelty by exclaiming feverishly: 'How heavy she is still! Will she take many days more to die?'

"I cannot recall without the bitterest remorse the glance she gave me, full of melancholy, though with the love-light shining through it. Did she hear and understand my insensate words? Did she hear them in heaven or on earth? Was it the shock of hearing them that killed her? I never knew, for when I knelt and took her hands between mine, kissing them passionately and pleading with her to pardon me, she was dead. I verily believe my many cruel words, all of which were absolutely impossible for me to suppress or even to control, did more, really, to kill her than the fatal disease itself.

"I am alone. I cannot bear to stay in this house, where everything reminds me of Sofia, constantly and continually accusing me for my criminal brutality. I am dying, almost literally, for want of the society of my fellow-men, yet I dare not intrude my

hateful presence upon even you. My company either offends or horrifies. Happiest and most blessed of creatures are men able to conceal their thoughts! Am I really a monster in soul, and a being exceptional among my fellow-creatures of like appearance? Worse! Am I not a murderer?

"Your unfortunate friend, JUAN CLARO."

III

Juan's letter left me sick and dazed for weeks after I had read it, but being a busy man full of professional cares and duties to the rest of the world, I had with the lapse of time completely forgotten it. One day, however, the door of my private office opened, and, pallid, his strong face greatly altered, seamed, and aged, Juan Claro entered. I was struck dumb for a moment, for I had no idea he was coming. Naturally I expected to be greeted with violent abuse and reproaches—I had never replied to that horrible letter. It was simply impossible; I could not do it, though I had tried faithfully to do so promptly. Juan, however, remained perfectly silent, and his expressive lips curled slightly in a faint, sad smile. He opened his arms, breaking the spell, and I threw myself into them, crying:

"Thank God, you are cured! Now you can come back into the world again!"

But Juan, though nodding assent, made not the slightest attempt to reply, and I asked him with an uneasy, nervous feeling if anything was the matter—if he had a sore throat.

The man's eyes opened wide as I asked the question, and a curious expression came over his face as he stared at me dumbly; but I felt relieved when he touched his throat on both sides near his tonsils and nodded affirmatively. With one foot he drew a chair up to my desk, seated himself, motioned me to sit down, took up a pen, and invited me to read over his shoulder while he wrote.

"If *you* want to think out loud," he began, "go ahead! I can see already that you have formed an unfavourable opinion." I confessed I could not understand him.

"I can explain my silence in a few words," he continued. "A few days after Sofia died I learned that my precious father-in-law had applied judicially for a commission to examine and report upon my mental condition, assuring the court that I had lost my faculties entirely and was not in my right mind. My excellent relative told the judges I had a vast estate which would fall to my son at my death, and he, of course, wished to administer the property for his grandson, should I be proven incapable, until the child attained his majority.

" The exigency was pressing, and it worried me greatly to think what might happen to Blas if by any ill chance the doctors should pronounce against me. I felt certain his scoundrelly grandfather would take care that the child either should never grow up or never get more than a tithe of the estate. In the condition in which I found myself no ordinary doctor would have certified to my sanity, for Sofia's death had left me more eccentric than ever. The danger that I would be shut up for ever in an asylum rendered me desperate and almost maddened me. I was willing to take any chance, to go to any length to attain my purpose. At last, seeing no other way out of my predicament, I hunted up a directory, wrote a note to a surgeon I knew, and awaited his arrival with impatience. Eventually he came, carrying under his arm a neat medical case.

" ' You have everything that will be required? ' I asked him.

" ' Oh yes,' he replied. ' Are you the companion or a relative of the sick man? '

" ' I am the sick man myself,' I smiled back at him, and stated just what I wanted in a few terse words.

" ' My God, no! I can't do that! ' he exclaimed. ' What you propose is a crime for which I should be responsible to the law! '

" ' Don't be a fool, now! ' I retorted sharply, covering him with a heavy revolver I had secreted in my pocket in case he should prove obstinate. ' Don't get nervous, but do as I tell you. My case is unusual. It demands an unusual remedy, and I purpose to have it, whether you like it or not. Do as I wish, or—the rose-bushes there by the fence would cover a new grave very neatly; no one would ever guess it was there! '

" ' But—explain yourself,' he stammered, pale and scared. ' Tell me the reason for your amazing request! '

" I told him briefly, and he replied doggedly that I might kill him before he would permit so heinous a crime. I laughed in his face, and waved the pistol. I had to have my joke. I was talking to a live man at last, and the fright I gave him was thoroughly enjoyable. It did me good to make him squirm.

" ' I know you, you doctor! ' I cried. ' You are my old schoolmate, Nuño. You are still a very wise old monkey! Do as I tell you, or I'll drop something new into that skull of yours that never let anything go once it got hold of it! '

" ' Very well, then,' he returned, flushing hotly as he recognised me. ' But remember—it is the insulted man, not the doctor under compulsion, who treats you! '

" ' Oh, anything you like,' I laughed jovially, ' so long as you do it, and do it right.'

" Now I am a highly esteemed person, a man greatly respected

and admired," Juan scribbled on with another of those queer smiles I was unable to understand, but which I already recognised as having in them something sinister, something to be dreaded. "The doctors have declared me perfectly sane, my former friends all appreciate me, and even Nuño, who is at heart really not a half-bad fellow, dines with me once a week. So must you."

"But what did you do—what medicine did Nuño give you to work this marvellous change?" I demanded, somewhat annoyed by his ignoring the very fact he knew I most wanted to learn. "And why don't you talk out loud? Surely your throat is not so sore you cannot speak except in whispers!"

Another of those bitter smiles answered my query before Juan bent to his scribbling again.

"Here is the *corpus delicti,*" he wrote on, taking out a package from his coat pocket with one hand while his pen was kept busily scratching with the other. It was a bottle. "That is the instrument with which I killed Sofia," he added, his powerful shoulders quivering with emotion. "Before, I could not live among men; now, I am beloved and respected. Everybody seeks me out and makes much of me. Yet I am the same man. I am delivered of the curse of tongues, the bane of humanity! I am the same, yet another person, the old, yet a new Juan. But I am all here!" he added, and his empty mouth opened in a ghastly laugh as he dropped the bottle into my startled hands.

I glanced at it hastily, to look up at him horrified, aghast. He looked at me curiously for a moment, reached over, shook my hand, dropped the bottle back into his pocket, and was gone.

JOSÉ FERNANDEZ BREMÓN

A SILKEN CORD

A CHINESE STORY

I

THE noble Chao-sé was extremely unfortunate. Yet his rice crop had been abundant; the white flower of the tea-plant almost hid the dark branches in his leafy orchards; the cocoons of his silkworms could not have been finer; he had an autograph from the Emperor in which figured the word *cheon*, a credential for long life; and finally, he had seen hacked into ten thousand pieces the body of his enemy, Pe-Kong, who had insulted him by cutting off his pig-tail.

Why, therefore, had the noble Chinaman ordered a beating to be given to the idol of Fó, so that its bulky porcelain body now lay in pieces on the ground?

But the fact remains that Chao-sé had scolded his old cook when presented with a stewed dog that his guests had found exquisite; he had disdained a cup of tea although it was genuine Hyson; and he took no notice of the monkey in spite of its caresses.

"My dear relatives," said Chao-sé with gravity, after the meal, to the three respectable Chinamen who listened to him, squatted in the drawing-room. "You already know that I intended to present my son at the court of our Celestial Sovereign."

The speaker and his hearers bowed their heads until their pig-tails touched the ground, and the monkey had to be removed because he imitated the action of those grave personages.

Chao-sé continued:

"My son Te-kú has not taken advantage of my teaching: he does not know how to bow his body eighteen times, nor does he know the unalterable formulas of our wise etiquette; he has repudiated the virtuous daughter of Ling, whose feet will fit into nut-shells; and you will, no doubt, be astonished to hear, my beloved relatives, that he was challenged by Chung, whose honoured body lies in the tomb, and refused to cut open his stomach whilst his adversary expired in triumph with his abdomen ripped open, in due and proper form. In this ignominy I want to ask your advice, and I submit myself to what you may decide to save the honour of my family."

" You ought, in the first place, to disinherit Te-kú," said the eldest relative.

" And distribute the property amongst us," said the second relative.

" And as our reputation is lost, a victim is required; you ought to strangle yourself to save the honour of the family," said the most distant relative.

These were the decisions of his advisers. Chao-sé felt a tardy remorse at having called them together.

II

" What present do you bring me in that box? " said the wife of Chao-sé that same evening, as her husband deposited on a lacquered table an ivory box carved with figures representing the revolution of the Yellow Caps.

" Beautiful and beloved Tian, I am preparing a surprise for you," said the noble Chinaman, gallantly.

Tian sat up in bed, showing her husband two little feet of but two inches each.

" You have been a model wife and I want history to speak of you as a model of virtues. Well, the family council demands a victim to save the honour of my family; as I have a certificate of long life written by my sovereign, it would be ungrateful and disrespectful if I cut short my life. Therefore I have selected you, my beloved Tian, to save our honour by means of the silken cord you will find in this box. I think you will be grateful to me for this proof of distinction and affection."

" Master! " said Tian, very much frightened, " I dare not kill myself, I am as timid as a chicken."

" Do not fear, my beloved; if you cannot kill yourself, since you are as timid as a chicken, get the cook to help you."

And the noble Chao-sé went out of the room after affectionately kissing his wife.

III

Tian seemed calm; the cook Kin was terrified.

" Kin, you require rest," said the former.

" I sleep little, madam," replied he, rubbing his eyes.

" You must be anxious to obtain the rewards that are reserved for you in the next life."

" I do not know what the great Buddha intends for me."

" Will you fly with me? " said Tian, looking tenderly at the poor cook.

" Madam . . ." tremblingly answered the unfortunate man.

" Fly from a house where your stews are not appreciated, be with me and be master of my magnificent jewels."

Kin kissed the ground to express his gratitude.

" Avoiding the vengeance of Chao-sé. . . ."

" Oh yes," exclaimed the cook terrified.

" There is a way. Your master Chao-sé, protected by an order of the Emperor, will live for many years yet; during that time we can fly from the earth and lose ourselves in space."

" I do not understand."

" It is very simple: I want you to accompany me on this last journey. Take the silken cord and hang yourself outside here, while I get together my jewels and kill myself; my resuscitated body will go in a short time to meet yours."

Kin opened his slanting eyes with terror: Tian smiled at him very sweetly.

" Good-bye," she said, " do not fail to meet me "; and she pushed him gently through the doorway, after having put the noose round his neck.

As Kin left the chamber of Tian, he heard a noise in the corridors. " That must be the monkey," he said, as he walked along very troubled, but taking the soft silk cord from his neck. " I must not commit suicide for two reasons: first, because I am not certain of coming to life in another world. Second, because if I come to life, the powerful Fó might take vengeance on me and beat me to pieces as I beat his idol."

The noise was repeated. It was not the monkey but Te-kú who made the noise, as he robbed the treasures of his father; the garden window was open; the jewels shone in a sack.

Kin, indignant, could not but reproach him for his action, and told him the position in which he had placed his family.

Te-kú kept on asking him to keep quiet, but Kin's replies grew louder and louder.

Finally, much moved and frightened, the former exclaimed, " Give me the silken cord: I am the guilty one, and it is I who must make the sacrifice."

And putting on the fatal necktie he fastened one end to the iron bar of the window, flung the sack on his back for his travelling expenses, and affectionately embraced the cook, saying:

" Go away and close the door, I do not want you to witness my agony."

Kin had no great confidence in him, but dared not annoy him. As he descended into the garden, he heard a loud knock and a cry of pain.

" Can he have fled . . .? " exclaimed Kin with suspicion.

The garden was very dark, but a struggling body hung suspended from the window and another darker shadow swung below.

" He has kept an appointment for me," said Kin, breathing freely and rubbing his neck. " The guilty one no longer lives."

He then went to his room, filled his pipe with opium, and fell asleep on his mat.

IV

At dawn on the following day the relations of Chao-sé, dressed in white—strict mourning in China—went to his house to offer him their last tributes; but to their great surprise they found him dressed in white also, and looking very solemn.

"So you are alive!" said his relatives indignantly.

Chao-sé then explained his scruples, the terror of his wife and the substitution of the cook and the voluntary expiation of his son. The relatives, after an animated discussion, expressed their agreement.

"Let us go into the garden, where no one has yet entered," said Chao-sé to his relatives. "We will take down the body of my unfortunate son."

The procession followed him, and on reaching the scene of the catastrophe they all received a great shock.

Hanging by the silken cord and swinging like a pendulum was the stiff body of a monkey.

"It is not my son," said Chao-sé, astonished.

"Master, I saw him tie the cord round his neck," said the cook. "Without doubt the monkey has taken the form of your son and left his own in the window. There is some magic here and the divine Fó is avenging himself."

"It is not so," replied the heirs: "it is Te-kú hanging by the cord. Do you not recognise his features? It is a perfect likeness."

"But," exclaimed Chao-sé in self-defence, "look at that mouth. . . ."

"It is just like yours, noble Chao-sé," said his relatives.

"Look, gentlemen, at those ears."

"They are just like yours."

"Remember that a victim is required," they whispered into his ear.

The noble Chinaman confessed, in the end, that it was his son, although somewhat disfigured.

The death of Te-kú was certified; they gave the monkey a magnificent funeral, and the council of relatives declared the honour of the family to be unstained.

EPILOGUE

In spite of his Sovereign's certificate Chao-sé lived only a few years. To claim his property a youth presented himself, saying that he was his son, that his name was Te-kú, and that he had fled from the paternal house by jumping from the garden window on a dark night.

When the matter was submitted to the courts a learned mandarin delivered the following verdict, which now serves in China to settle all similar cases:

" The death of Te-kú being legally proven:

" No one having disappeared from the house of Chao-sé on the day mentioned but a monkey whose whereabouts are unknown.

" I declare that if the plaintiff is right in saying that he fled, he can be no one but the monkey;

" And if he has not spoken the truth, he deserves to be hanged with the silken cord preserved by the relatives of the deceased."

In face of such an alternative, Te-kú chose to declare himself a monkey and was handed over to an organ-grinder.

JOSÉ FRANCÉS

19TH CENTURY

THE EXPRESSION

A FEW moments before the voice of the prompter sounded through the corridors of the theatre, the manager knocked at the door of Pablo Heredia's dressing-room.

"May I come in?"

"Come in, Don Luis."

Heredia, the star actor, turned his gaze from the looking-glass to the face of the manager.

"You look very glum, Don Luis. . . . Small audience, eh?"

"So small, that we cannot go on like this, friend Heredia. We must put on *Fuerza rota* as soon as possible. Otherwise I think there will be no salaries next Monday."

He dropped into one of the arm-chairs near the wardrobe.

Heredia did not answer, but turned again to the glass and painted his eyes lightly.

There was a long silence. Neither of the two men wanted to speak first, fearful of saying anything hasty. The manager put his trust in *La Fuerza rota,* a rough, brutal drama dealing with crime-hardened men and women, suiting Heredia's temperament down to the ground. The great actor had welcomed the work with enthusiasm, and predicted that it would be his greatest triumph. Nevertheless, the final scene worried him very much. The principal character receives a knife-wound and lies dying from loss of blood, unconscious, in the misty throes of death, at the feet of a woman.

During the rehearsals he merely suggested the expression without accentuating it, with that monotonous indifference he always exhibited away from the public.

But the manager and the author of the work saw in the weak and undefined expression all the tragic intensity which the great actor would impart at the culminating moment. They talked of it, and the hope ran from one lip to another and appeared in the theatre gossip of the critics.

Heredia was proud of it at first; then he shrugged his shoulders; and finally began to experience an unreasoning dread, an almost

animal fear, of the third act, of that expression of supreme convulsion in which would be portrayed everything: rage, pain, love for life, love for woman, shame at defeat.

But above all, the violent facial tension with which death clothes pain whilst still in life. . . . What must the eyes be like? What colour ought the lips to acquire? And how should the voice sound? Ought the hands to tremble? Should they claw the air? Should they have that weakness, that sickly softness that seems to stretch the fingers?

Cruel, terrible questions, to which he could find no answer before the looking-glass; they absorbed his thoughts during the day and kept him awake at night.

The rehearsals went on and on. The author and the management fixed two or three dates and Heredia always postponed them. The others all knew their parts. Some afternoons they boasted of rehearsing without the prompter. The news of Heredia's fear spread among the players. They made biting and sarcastic jokes about the actor and the title of the piece. His companions spoke of him with that malicious jealousy so common among people on the boards.

And nevertheless, in spite of the empty theatre, the author's despair, the manager's protests, despite the fact that he saw his fame in peril, Heredia delayed the production.

. . . . . .

"May we start, Don Pablo?"

It was the prompter looking in through the half-open door.

"Come in," said Don Luis.

"Yes, sir?"

"Bad, eh?"

"Yes, sir. . . . Besides, nearly all of them are deadheads. . . . But don't worry: we can manage them. There are more of us on the stage."

Heredia bit his lips.

"All right. . . . Go on, start; call the scene before."

The prompter rushed off. A bell sounded sharply, three long rings. Afterwards came the usual orders.

"We are going to begin! Lights on!"

The sound of hurried steps on the floor above, the opening of doors, and the frou-frou of skirts. Then a deep silence: the curtain had gone up.

"Well, friend Heredia, what are we going to do? I for one cannot go on like this. The author talks of withdrawing the piece. . . . Think of it . . .! There is no alternative but to fix a date."

Heredia resigned himself.

"All right . . . say . . . Monday."

"Monday? No, Heredia, certainly not. Friday. That will give us four full houses for certain; the first night, the Saturday evening, and the two performances on Sunday."

"But . . ."

"No, no. To-day is Tuesday; now then, in three days, the day after to-morrow, you arrange a dress rehearsal and I will advise the photographers. I am going now to tell them in the box-office to get the notices out and to order the posters from the printers. Do you agree?"

"Very well, I agree."

The manager fled, and in the passage ran into the prompter, who arrived shouting:

"Come along! your cue, Don Pablo! You will be late for your entry. . . ."

II

About two o'clock in the morning he left the theatre after settling details and answering questions about the new piece.

He went alone, refusing to be accompanied. The night was damp and misty. November was drawing to a close, and the keenness of the air made him turn up the collar of his coat.

He started walking aimlessly, anxious for solitude, for reflection, away from the stifling air of the theatre, free from that sudden fever awakened in him by the proximity of the first night which was to ensure the salaries.

He was dazed, dubious, frightened, in that cruel emotion of uneasiness and hostility that racks body and mind when final decisions have been made after long hesitation.

How must he express that moment? How ought the eyes to look? What should the voice sound like . . . ?

He walked along unconscious, deaf, insensible to the steady drizzle, unheeding the slippery ground.

Gradually he left behind him the broad central streets and came to the poorer quarters, which on that November night were wrapped in tragic darkness. Streets of crime and poverty, with lamps that shone yellow, and at intervals the red glow of a tavern. . . .

Since the first rehearsals of *La Fuerza rota* he had acquired that custom of walking about the plebeian quarters, searching in the dens, in the coffee-houses, and in the taverns, for the type imagined by the author.

But always with companions, like a merry party on the spree. Not as now, alone and full of anxiety, muffled up in his fur coat.

Suddenly he stopped and looked round him. He had lost his way. He was at the far end of a narrow street. To the left, the blackness of some vacant land. To the right, the squalid hostility of tall houses with narrow doorways.

Not a voice nor the sound of footsteps. Through the mist showed the dark yellow stains of distant street lamps.

He started walking back quickly, with heavy resounding steps, telling himself he was not afraid. For a moment the dreadful silence of the spot chilled his heart.

Where could he be? Perhaps in——

He turned a corner and stopped to look from end to end of the new street. He did not recognise it either. . . . Opposite to him three women were wrangling in filthy language. . . .

He continued walking through other streets, all similar and unfamiliar, more than ever lost and with growing uneasiness.

His mouth felt dry, his temples throbbed. . . .

By chance he found himself outside a tavern. The memory of his obsession came back to him, the search for the type, that fierce, cynical figure of a hooligan which he had to create on the following Friday.

He put his hand on the latch and opened the door. A heavy, evil-smelling vapour struck upon his face.

The room was small and squalid. There were three tables occupied and one vacant. Behind the counter a fat man with a red moustache reading *The Radical.*

His entry created considerable surprise. Then, on seeing him sit down and unbutton his fur coat, there were whispers.

At one table sat a ragged old woman, taking short sips at a large glass of brandy.

At the other table a woman and a man conversed in low tones. And at the last table, the one in the corner, two men.

The barman approached Heredia.

"What's it going to be?"

"Anything . . . Beer. . . ."

He saw how foolish he had been to enter there, to take off his gloves and let them see the jewels on his hands. But there was no help for it, and, as on other occasions in times of danger, he put a bold front on his rashness. He stared fixedly, impudently, at the two men in the corner.

The men avoided his gaze. They were poorly dressed and appeared to be gaol-birds.

Little by little the instinctive fear of the actor changed to curiosity, almost to joy. Either of those two men could serve him as his model. Their foreheads were narrow, their eyes sunken under the double darkness of the eyebrows. The hairy hands with their short fingers and bitten nails looked like claws. The lower jaws protruded with a primitive expression of beasts.

But in a short time, seeing they were watched, the two men exchanged a few words in a low tone and left the tavern.

Time passed. The old hag had fallen asleep on the table. The

man and the woman continued their whispering. The barman went on reading *The Radical.*

Heredia got up, paid, and went out into the street.

The cold and the mist awaited him outside as before. He looked up and down, wondering which direction to take.

After all, it mattered nothing. He would come to a stop somewhere. The street was silent and deserted. His steps echoed on the pavement. He lit a cigar.

Long and narrow streets. Short and narrow streets.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, a broad avenue with leafless trees. At the end, black factory-buildings. He was in the Rondas.

He stopped and looked in vain for the two lights of a cab.

He heard footsteps behind him. He turned his head and thought he saw two men in the mist.

Could they be . . . ?

He continued walking, and suddenly two arms seized him from behind, a leg was thrust between his, and he fell sideways. . . .

Then a blow in the chest, a sensation of acute cold, and he lost consciousness. . . .

III

When he opened his eyes, they were laying him on a bed in the ambulance station. He felt a penetrating pain in his left side. His throat was dry, his chest panting, his forehead damp, and a strange coldness in the nose. . . . An extreme languidness and lassitude crept up his limbs.

He vaguely recalled a knife-thrust, perhaps death. . . .

And he also remembered the other thing—the expression, that expression which he had never expected to find.

And suddenly, as if demented, he sat up in bed shouting:

"Here! Here! Quick! A mirror! A mirror! I want to see my face!"

ARTURO REYES

1864–1913

FROM BULTO TO CORACHA

At twelve o'clock sharp I shall be at your window; just think that if you decide to like me, in less than fifteen days you will not be Lola ' the Carnation ' but the queen of women."

And after saying this Don Luis moved slowly away from the window, at which Lola stood until he had disappeared.

Lola's thoughts were in a whirl, and well they might be: on one side Don Luis, a handsome fellow with more gold than was ever found in Peru; on the other, Joseito, a lazy, happy-go-lucky but lovable lad, who only had clothes on his back by divine mercy.

When Don Luis had gone, the little gipsy sat down at a table, placed one elbow on it, and rested her pretty face on the palm of her hand. Heaven knows how long she would have remained buried in her weighty thoughts, if she had not been disturbed by the entry of Uncle Bitoque, a gipsy older than a palm-tree, more bent than a pot-hook, clothed in a ragged Marseillaise jacket, the *faja* or waistband extending from the armpit to the hip, a pair of trousers extensively mended, shoes well ventilated, shirt without the slightest trace of its primitive whiteness, and a hat which, so its owner swore, had been called a *catite* in the very remote days of his youth.

The old man came into the room with all the freedom permitted him by his distant relationship to " the Carnation," and with all the slowness necessitated by his years and rheumatism; taking a seat opposite the girl he asked her in a slightly thick voice:

" May we know why the finest girl in Bulto has her dark little face so sad to-day? "

" It's nothing, grandfather; I seem to ache all over."

" A very pleasant ache, caused by a welcome silver dart! And the old woman? Where is the ugly bird? "

" Where is she? By her stall! "

" Listen, Lola, have you any more of that rascally Farajan which is better than elixir? A few drops would do me nicely! "

Dolores got up, and taking a bottle from a little cupboard

emptied its contents into a glass, which she offered to the old man.

He swallowed it with relish, and after licking his lips and passing the back of his hand across his mouth, exclaimed:

"What splendid stuff it is! There never was a finer drink! Every glass of it makes me feel a year younger. Now I am going to smoke like a chimney, while you tell me what is the matter with the prettiest little gipsy in the world; for you know quite well that this *puri* (old man) has a lamp in each eye, and he will tell you which is the best path in the wood and the gentlest wave in the sea."

"And what do you want me to tell you?"

"I want to know whether after all you are going from Bulto to Limonar or from Bulto to Coracha."

"And how can I tell? Do you know what has happened to the daughter of my mother?"

"I am sure I do, my winsome one, I am sure I do. The trouble with you is that you are in the middle of a field with two paths before you, and you don't know which of them will lead you to the land of your dreams. Am I not right?"

"When you have finished, I'll tell you."

"Well, then: one of them seems smoother than the palm of your hand, but you are a little frightened of that path, because you fear, and rightly so, that if you go along there you may stumble and fall over a precipice; the other path is steeper than the hill to Golgotha, and to climb it you need strength and will, but at the end of that difficult little path is the fountain with the clearest water of life. Isn't that gospel truth?"

"Go on, grandfather, I like to hear you."

"Good: you are at the beginning of the two paths, unable to decide which to take, when a *gachi* (old woman) uglier than the Oritgoza and as good as can be, loving you with all the trunk and all the branches, tries to push you along the path she thinks the best: but in your heart you have a boat loaded with dreams, and each time you think of taking that path it casts anchor and you cannot move. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, you are right, grandfather."

"That just shows Bitoque knows a thing or two!"

"Since you are almost a wizard, tell me which path the daughter of my mother should take?"

"There are more thorns in that question than on a bramble-bush; but there is no need for me to tell you, for you have examples to look at. Remember what happened to Cloto 'the Mendruguita.'"

"And what happened to her?"

"Oh, nothing! She disdained a *calé* (boy) better than the gold in a ring I had, for a Castilian more treacherous than Judas Is-

cariot. Within a year she had lost everything, and with a *churumbel* (baby) in her arms, had to earn her living as a fortune-teller, looked down on by all the gipsies, and no one willing to give her a crumb."

"The man who threw her into the ditch must have had a bad heart and no money."

"Neither good nor bad; neither much nor little; just an ordinary man: but we are all like that, we deserve to be punished."

"Yes, but Don Luis——"

"Heaven defend us, Lola! I did not mention any names; don't be silly, Don Luis is a good fellow, has plenty of coin in his pocket, and is spick and span to look at."

"That is on the surface; but what about inside?"

"Who can tell what the man is like inside! He might be sweet as syrup or bitter as gall. If you ask me about Joseito, that is another matter, because I have known him since he was born; of course, the poor gipsy is just pining for you. The lad looks as fine as a statue, as handsome as a painting, and is good beyond a doubt, and as to singing, there is no one in all Coracha who can beat him and no one who would dare sing in front of him; besides all that, for you, and you alone, he has scorned a good chance."

"How and when did he do that? I have heard nothing about it."

"Because you are in Limbo and have only an ugly old bird by your side croaking to you what suits her best; what I tell you is as true as the sun that shines on us: Joseito, unwilling to play you a trick and because he loves you from head to foot, has taken no notice of Batatero's grand-daughter, Tonita 'the Lunares,' who would give the eyes in her head for what you are going to throw away."

A few moments later Uncle Bitoque left the room, and as he went off Lola murmured quietly:

"That *gachi* Lunares is looking for trouble, and she will get the marks of my fingers on her face!"

II

It was eleven o'clock in the evening, and the cold night dew had forced the neighbours to go indoors, thus preventing them from turning the street of Miraflores into a spacious dormitory, as is their custom in summer.

Lola, with a frown on her pretty brow, was seated on one of the best chairs in her room, listening to her aunt, who was saying:

"It is settled that you give Don Luis notice to quit, that you throw away your good luck; let that be quite settled; and now, tell

me what you are going to do with your Joseito, with that tramp whose mouth must be rusty from eating so little, and his suit stuck to his back with gum to prevent the wind blowing it away; tell me what you are going to do: are you going to feed him on *polos* (Andalusian songs) and gipsy dances? "

" But all times are not alike."

" Come, come, child, somebody has bewitched you; you have been caught with bird-lime and nets."

" For God's sake, don't torment me any more, you have nearly driven me mad already; for you, to get you out of this miserable place, I would stifle my heart, I would destroy this love which springs from the depths of my soul; but what would happen if, after three days, after throwing all I love into the street, Don Luis should change his mind? What is going to happen to us? Our people will throw ashes on our heads; poor José would give me what I deserved, he would spit in my face; and I would have to throw myself into the Gualmeina. Is that what you wish for me? Are those your plans for me? "

" I only desire to do the best for you! I see things through other glasses; when I gave you that advice I was thinking only of you; I may die any day when least expected, and before going I would like to put you where you deserve to be. Now, you think it is a bad road; you prefer poverty with José to wealth with Don Luis. Very well, do as you like, for I don't want to go against your wishes; and when Don Luis comes later on, tell him to put spurs to his horse, for rather than see you unhappy I am ready to do anything."

And saying this, the old woman bent her wrinkled face to Lola's, who kissed her on the forehead, exclaiming:

" People are right when they say you are an angel."

When the old woman had retired to bed, Lola seated herself at the window-sill; through the half-open shutter, from which the whole street could be seen, came the light of the moon, its rays lighting up Lola's beauty, her fawn-like eyes, her dark complexion, her red lips, her white teeth, her oval profile, the graceful shoulders covered with a shawl of red crepon, the black ribbon which encircled her throat, and the printed muslin of her dress.

When Dolores was completely lost in thought, a figure appeared round the corner of the street: it was Joseito, who came forward somewhat unsteadily, dressed in his far from brand-new clothes, but lively, youthful, with his beautiful eyes saddened, and a drawn expression on his usually cheerful and roguish face.

Joseito had heard that Don Luis had spoken to " the Carnation " that morning; he had been told by Narizotas his best friend; when he heard it he felt cold, a sudden pain gripped him, and " I am going to find out what that young man wanted; it is probably

nothing urgent," he murmured in a threatening tone, trying to escape from his friend.

"Get that idea out of your head, my boy," said Narizotas, taking hold of him by the arm. "Men are stronger, more wilful, and think more; naturally, when Don Luis approached Lola, he obtained her consent; so give her as good as she has given you, and quit this silly fooling, and come with me. To-day I have had some luck in business and we are going to get drunk; one cannot sell a horse profitably every day, nor get full of wine every night."

And making the best of things, Joseito went with Narizotas. It was eleven o'clock at night when the former, after leaving his friend at the tavern to sleep off the effects of the wine as comfortably as he could, started off, if not completely in the dark like his friend, at least more than in the twilight, towards the house of the girl of his thoughts.

Joseito, on arriving opposite the house, with his hat pushed back, and his large, black, curly locks over his temples, remained silent for some moments leaning against the wall; he could not go away without speaking to "the Carnation"; the thorn in his heart was very painful, and she must be the one to take it out.

He remembered, while thinking of this, the best weapons with which he had formerly captured that fair fortress, and throwing back his head he sang in a sweet voice, in a plaintive voice, in a voice full of caressing harmonies:

Dicen que me has orviao
por otro, gitana mía;
el que tu querer me quite
pena tiene de la vía.[1]

That rhythmic voice, ardent and full of tenderness and tears, that couplet, at once a lament and a terrible sentence, moved the innermost soul of Dolores, and throwing the window wide open and leaning on the window-sill, she exclaimed in trembling accents:

"What are you doing, Jocelillo?"

"Singing, lest I die of pain through your deceit."

"Come here, my Lilac, and tell me what ails the boy I love most."

And José approached the window slowly, reached her, seized the iron bars with both hands, and looking at Lola with very mournful eyes, moist and shining, exclaimed in a melting voice:

[1] They tell me you've forgotten
me for another, gipsy mine;
he who robs me of your love
must pay me with his life.

" They told me you were going to leave me, because I was poor, because I was miserable, and because I was badly dressed."

. . . . . .

And it is related that when Don Luis came that evening to the corner of the street of Miraflores and saw José below the window of Lola " the Carnation " he turned pale, frowned angrily, and after a few moments of hesitation continued his way, murmuring in a grieved and choking voice:

" Yes, it is best as it is; it is the only time I have approached a woman with my heart in my hand."

ARTURO REYES

WHAT A TEAR CAN DO

A TALE OF ANDALUSIA

I

DOLORES "the Little Miracle" knew not what to do nor which path to take at the cross-roads where she found herself, owing to the unexpected wooing of Joseito "the Caramel," and after a night of sleeplessness, of tossing and more tossing on her couch, and of sighs and more sighs, she jumped out of bed: with her hair still in disorder and, perhaps for the first time in her twenty years, without looking at herself in the mirror, she went out to the patio, eager to inhale deeply the early morning breeze.

The day, like all or nearly all summer days in Andalusia, was fresh and fragrant, and a soft wind gently shook the green leaves of the fig-trees; the clothes hanging out to dry on cords and bass ropes looked like pennants and snow-white streamers.

Dolores filled her lungs with the fresh and fragrant air, and seating herself in the chair in which Señá Pepa "the Tulip" generally took her *siesta,* she again became absorbed in her sad meditations.

And so buried in her thoughts was our gentle heroine, that she did not at first hear a door opened and some one come out of one of the rooms round the patio. It was Señá Pepa, a little old woman, not only thin, but bent, with her chin on her chest, the tip of her nose on her chin, and a mouth stretching almost from ear to ear, dressed in a clean, much-mended skirt, and a jacket of the same cloth, a dark kerchief covering her hair, thin and white as snow.

Señá Pepa came forward slowly and silently, leàning on a stick, and stopped in front of Dolores to gaze at her young and graceful figure, her face with its regular features, full dark eyes, and the mouth purple-lipped and somewhat large; the soft red glow of her complexion darkening near the ears, between the eyebrows, and on the upper lip into velvet-like shades, as dark, almost, as her heavy eyebrows and her curly abundant hair.

Señá Pepa, after contemplating her in silence for several

moments, tapped the ground with her stick and exclaimed in a cracked and discordant voice:

" Good-morning, my sleepless one, God bless you this day."

Dolores raised her head and replied with a melancholy smile:

" Good-morning, Señá Pepa, I hope He will, for we certainly need it very much."

The old woman came forward until she was close to Dolores, who had got up to give her the seat, and after sitting down without having the politeness to thank her, exclaimed:

" And how is it you are up so early? What has prevented you from sleeping? Mosquitoes or your thoughts? "

" Mosquitoes! It was not the wicked mosquitoes that robbed me of my sleep, Señá Pepa! "

" Well, if it is not mosquitoes, it must be love; for at your age, Lola, when sleep will not come and you lie awake, it is the penalty of love."

" I can't say whether it's love; but I do know that I have not closed my eyes all night, and that my head is split with so much thinking, and my body aches with so much turning and tossing on my mattress."

" But what is happening to a child prettier than the morning star? "

" Well, what is happening to me is this. . . . I am going to explode, if God does not help me."

" Going to explode? "

" Yes, señora, I am going to explode."

" And why is that? "

" Well, because . . . you know I have been almost betrothed to Toñico ' the Cartameño ' for a long long time, you know that. don't you, Señá Pepa? "

" Why, of course, it is known all over the province! "

" And do you know also that yesterday Joseito ' the Cartujano ' came to me, with his heart almost quaking? "

" I didn't know that; I had no idea that fine young man had spoken to you."

" And you know who Joseito ' the Cartujano ' is? "

" Of course! . . . most certainly I know . . . the son of Cañamaque . . . a handsome fellow, who looks as though he were made of pasteboard and decked with tinsel."

" And you know Toño very well, don't you? "

" Of course. . . . I have often sung him to sleep. . . . Why, when he was born I was living next door to his mother—who has gone to glory, poor Catalina—a good woman with a heart larger than a tower, and a wonderful voice for singing *jaberas* and *polos* that nearly drove us frantic with delight! "

" Well, then; the trouble with me, Señá Pepa, is, that Toño is

very fond of me; Toño has been following me about almost since I could walk, and although Toño is not all I could wish for, the truth is that I am fond of him; but Toño . . . Toño . . . Toño——"

"Toño . . . what?"

"Well, Toño has nothing more than the night and the day and——"

"There I think you are wrong," interrupted "the Tulip" sharply, "because Toño earns money, not for driving in carriages or for gambling but certainly enough to keep his palate from fainting and to avoid walking about with nothing on."

"That also is true, he earns . . . earns . . . but he does not benefit by it . . . he does not know how to spend it; surely the man must owe some money . . . have some expenses, for money was made to spend."

"Well, he has no vices and does not get into trouble, and as to being nice, he is almost more than need be."

"But I don't say he is not: let us talk about what interests me most; and it is, as I have already told you, that Joseito 'the Cartujano' has approached me and has asked me to marry him, and at once; and you know quite well that 'Cartujano' has plenty of *parneses* (money), and as well as having many *parneses* he is not a bad fellow, and besides . . . as my mother says: 'Don't you be silly, Dolores, love won't feed you; sorrow follows happiness, and necessity is like a bramble-bush, all thorns; now give up your silly ideas, and if "the Cartujano" comes as God wills, go on with "the Cartujano" until Toñico gets jealous, and if Toñico becomes bitter, let him stand it or not stand it, or let him jump off the Morro or emigrate to Argentina.'"

"Your mother always looked at things in that way; she never had any other god but money; that is why her hair was always so well arranged, and she always lived like the very angels, wore only kid boots, dressed only in silk frocks, and adorned her fingers with nothing but rings set with rubies."

And with so much irony did Señá Pepa say this, that Dolores exclaimed in a pleading voice, and looking at her entreatingly:

"But what I want, grandmother, why I have come out so early to the patio, is simply to get your advice."

"Look here, Dolores," replied the old woman with an expression of annoyance, "don't you ask me for advice, because I'm not going to give it you, do you understand? I am not going to give it to you because I have had enough of not minding my own business, and being torn to bits in every dispute.

"But listen, what I am going to tell you is this . . . that although it may not seem true, I was twenty myself once, and if I was not beautiful, at least I was not a fright, and in my early flights two birds came after me, as in your case, and wanted to

carry me off, one Juan ' the Frog,' and the other my Paco, to-day my Señ Frasquito, and ' the Frog ' had more notes than cells in a honeycomb or nuts on a nut-tree, and my Señ Frasquito had nothing but a rag in front and another behind and two pairs of socks; and I married my Señ Frasquito because my heart told me to. Now, though it is true that I have had to work hard and have had many troubles, it is also true that whilst the crust is always hard, the crumbs are soft and at times more than soft."

II

What Señá Pepa said to Lola that morning seemed to have confused her altogether, and when the hour arrived for Toñico to come to her house, to be driven to distraction by merely looking at her, she went out, as usual, to the patio, and sat down by the kerbstone of the well, where she and her faithful lover were accustomed to hold their pleasant conversations.

" But listen, Lola," said Señá Rasolfa, the landlady, in a sarcastic voice, " surely there is better work for your pretty figure at the window to-night."

" That depends on what my own wishes are," replied she, with a show of ill-temper.

" Well, it is Joseito ' the Cartujano ' who says so; he is telling everybody who cares to hear him that he is coming to-night at ten o'clock to your window to talk to you about the first banns."

" That will depend; eh, Dolores? " asked Uncle Paco, the basket-maker, and seeing that she did not reply, he continued:

" The truth is, I myself would not know which road to choose, and if I were in ' the Cartameño's ' skin I would make more noise than the loudest tattoo."

Soon the conversation became general between the neighbours, and Dolores was already beginning to feel tired when Toñico ' the Cartameño ' came into the patio, looking sad and disconsolate. After saluting the gathering in a stifled voice he went up to Dolores, seized her roughly by the hand, gazed at her with questioning anxiety, with a look of pain, of supplication, of love, and asked her in a trembling, almost frightened voice, in a voice so low that he could only be heard by Dolores:

" Is it true, Dolores, what I have just heard? is it true that you are going to leave me for a fellow called Joseito ' the Cartujano '? "

Dolores glanced at Antonio with a timid look, and answered in an unsteady voice, but trying to smile:

" And who on earth told you such bad news? "

" What does it matter who it was! . . . some one . . . and, upon my word, I felt tempted to kill the man who told me! But

then I began to think, and realising that I do not deserve to have you, I said to myself: ' Perhaps it is true . . . perhaps she does not care for me . . . perhaps she cares for that other fellow, and if she cares for him, to ask her to give him up would be as if they told me, even if the King himself told me, to stop liking the one who is even more to me than the water I drink and the air I breathe.' "

" Well, can't I like you, Toño! can't I like you, my Toño! " exclaimed Dolores; his low and quivering, almost sobbing voice, rather than his words, beginning to wound her heart and to arouse her conscience.

" But . . . but I do not say you can't like me! . . . I do not say that . . . you will like me, but as one likes a friend . . . a friend . . . how terrible! Dolores, how terrible! For a long time, a very long time, I have thought of no one but you; you have always been the rose-bush that has filled my soul and mind with flowers; whenever I had a sorrow, any great doubt, I thought of you and my doubts vanished; when my body ached from so much working, day and night, I said to myself: ' Go on and suffer and break yourself if need be, body of mine, for it is through her and for her that you are suffering and enduring, it is to save so much money that she shall want for nothing, so that she may have everything she wishes '; and I worked and worked, and fled from my friends, and never entered a tavern, and at the cost of sweat and toil, I had already got, without the world knowing it, all the feathers for making my nest, and when I thought of saying to you, ' Listen, Dolores, here is my heart and my nest, both are for you, if you want them; when I was trembling with joy . . . when I thought I had already won paradise, when——"

And Toño " the Cartameño " had to pause, and a tear, only one, wavered between his long black lashes.

Dolores saw that tear, saw Toño dash it away roughly and angrily with his clenched fist, and something noble and tender rose in her soul and:

" But who on earth told you that I do not want your nest and your heart for myself? Who has invented that story against me? "

. . . . . .

And an hour later, when Toño " the Cartameño," radiant with joy, saw himself portrayed in the large pupils of Dolores, and " the Cartujano," weary and desperate, withdrew from the street, tired of exhibiting the grace of his figure before the closed window of the woman he sought in vain, the neighbours continued their animated whispers in picturesque groups, and Señá Pepa and Seño Frasquito, seated in the doorway of their room and bathed in the moonlight, doubtless thought with melancholy vagueness, as they watched Toño and Dolores, of their own long-distant youth and its dead joys.

RAMÓN DEL VALLE-INCLÁN

B. 1869

FEAR

THE slow and terrifying chill that seems the herald of death, the real chill of fear, I have felt but once. That was many years ago in the time of entailed estates, when rank and title were to be obtained by military service.

I had just been awarded the cordon of chevalier in the grenadiers. A post with the royal guards would have been my preference, but my mother objected, so, following the tradition of the family, I became a grenadier in the regiment of the King. I cannot remember how many years ago that was, but the down had hardly sprouted upon my lips, and to-day I am almost a white-haired old man.

Before I joined my regiment my mother wished to bestow her benediction. The poor lady was living in retirement, within the precincts of a village where stood our ancestral home, and in those days I was submissive and obedient.

On the afternoon of my arrival she sent for the Prior of Brandeso to come to hear my confession in the family chapel. My sisters, Maria Isabel and Maria Fernanda, who were little girls, went to the garden to gather roses, and with these flowers my mother filled the vases on the altar. Then she called me gently to give me her prayer-book and to exhort me to examine my conscience.

"Go to the pulpit, my son," said she. "That is the best place for you."

The castle pulpit was in the centre of the platform, contiguous to which was the library. The chapel was dark, damp, and full of echoes. In the background appeared the armorial bearings granted by Ferdinand and Isabella to the Lord of Brandamín, Pedro Aguiar de Tor, known also as El Chivo (the Ram) and El Viejo (the old man). That famous warrior was buried at the right of the altar, and above him was the statue of a knight in armour, kneeling in attitude of prayer. The jewelled holy-lamp, with its dim flame, burned night and day before the platform. The gilded clusters of sacred fruit seemed to present themselves to the worshipper. The patron saint was that pious Oriental King, the one of

the three wise men who offered myrrh to the child Jesus. His tunic of silk bordered in gold shimmered with the mystic splendour of an Oriental miracle. The light of the lamp, hung on silver chains, fluttered like some timid bird, eager to fly upward to the saint's shoulders.

My mother desired that hers should be the hands which that afternoon would place the baskets of flowers at the saint's feet as an offering from her devout soul. When that had been done she kneeled before the altar with my sisters at her side. I, from above, heard only the murmur of her voice as it brokenly repeated the *Ave Marias,* but when it was the children's turn to make responses, I heard every word of the ritual.

The afternoon dragged on dismally and the prayers rumbled through the silent darkness of the chapel, hollow, sad, and sublime, like an echo of the Passion. My eyes grew heavy. The girls moved to one side and seated themselves upon the steps of the platform. Their dresses were as white as the linen of priestly vestments. I could perceive only the dim shadow of my mother as she prayed under the presbytery. In her hands was an open book, and she read with bowed head.

As it grew later, the wind stirred the drapery of a lofty window, and then I could see in the darkened sky the orb of the moon, supernatural and pale, like some goddess who is worshipped in woodlands and marshes.

My mother closed the book with a sigh and called her daughters. I saw their two ghostly forms pass across the presbytery and divined that they were once more kneeling beside her. The light of the lamp cast its feeble rays upon her fair hands as they again opened the book. Her slow, pious voice scarce broke the silence as she read. The girls were listening, and I was dimly conscious of their tresses spreading over the white frocks and falling in identical manner on each side of their faces, endowing them with sad and Christlike expression.

I had fallen asleep when suddenly the shrieks of my sisters aroused me. I looked and saw them in the middle of the presbytery clinging to my mother. They were crying with terror. My mother grasped their hands and all three fled.

I descended in haste. I was about to follow them, but stopped, overcome by fright. In the sepulchre of the ancient warrior his bones were rattling! It made one's hair stand on end. The chapel had become deathly silent, and one could hear distinctly the hollow, awe-inspiring rolling of the skull upon its pillow of stone. A fear came over me such as I have never experienced since, but I did not wish my mother and my sisters to think me a coward, wherefore I remained motionless in the middle of the presbytery, with my eyes glued on the half-open door. The light of the little lamp

flickered. On high a window curtain blew back and clouds were seen passing over the moon, while stars were appearing and disappearing like our mortal lives.

Suddenly in the distance resounded the animated barking of dogs and the tinkle of little bells. A grave and churchly voice cried:

"Here, Carabel! Here, Capitán!"

It was the Prior of Brandeso, who had come to receive my confession. Then I heard the tremulous, frightened voice of my mother, and heard distinctly the pattering of the dogs' feet as they ran. The grave, churchly voice rose majestically like a Gregorian chant:

"Now we shall see what it was—certainly nothing supernatural. Here, Carabel! Here, Capitán!"

And the Prior of Brandeso, preceded by his greyhounds, appeared in the door of the chapel.

"Grenadier of the King, what has happened?"

"Señor Prior, I heard the skeleton trembling within its tomb."

The prior slowly crossed the chapel. He was an erect, haughty figure, for in his youthful years he also had been a King's grenadier. He came up to me, walking without lifting the loose folds of his white vestments, and as he placed his hand on my shoulders and looked into my eyes, said solemnly:

"May the Prior of Brandeso never be able to say that he has seen a King's grenadier tremble!"

He did not remove his hand from my shoulders and we remained motionless, looking at each other in silence. At that moment we heard the skull of the warrior turn. The prior's hand did not tremble. Beside us the dogs pricked up their ears, and the hair on their necks bristled. Anew we heard the skull move on its pillow of stone. The prior shook me and said:

"Señor Grenadier, we must see whether these are goblins or witches!"

He approached the sepulchre and laid hold of the two rings of copper embedded in the flagstone which covered the body and bore the epitaph. I stepped forward, trembling. The prior looked at me without opening his lips. I laced my hand over his in one of the rings and pulled. Slowly we raised the stone. The cavity, black and cold, was before us. I could see that the dry and yellowish skull was still moving. The prior put his hand down into the tomb and laid hold of the fearful object, then, without a word, handed it to me. I took it, trembling. I stood in the middle of the presbytery, and the light from the lamp fell upon my hands. As I looked horror overcame me, and I convulsively dropped the skull, for within it was a brood of snakes, which uncoiled, hissing, as it rolled down the steps one at a time. The prior's fierce eyes

glared at me from beneath his cowl as from behind the visor of a helmet:

"Señor Grenadier of the King, there is no absolution for you! I do not absolve cowards!"

And he left the chapel, drawing after him his long priestly vestments. The words of the Prior of Brandeso resounded long in my ears. I can hear them yet. It is perhaps from them that I learned afterward to smile at death as at a fair lady.

RAMÓN DEL VALLE-INCLÁN

LUCKY BOY!

THE oldest old woman in the village, holding her grandchild by the hand, walks along a green-bordered path, which looks sad and numbed beneath the cold light of dawn. Her back is bent and she sighs as she walks, giving advice to the child, who is crying quietly.

"Now that you are beginning to earn money you must be humble, for it is the law of God."

"Yes, ma'am, yes. . . ."

"You must pray for your benefactor and for the souls of the departed."

"Yes, ma'am, yes. . . ."

"You must buy a rush cape at the fair of San Gundian, if you have saved enough money, as it rains often."

"Yes, ma'am, yes. . . ."

"When you walk along the paths you must take off your clogs."

"Yes, ma'am, yes. . . ."

And the grandmother and her grandchild go on walking, walking, walking. . . . The loneliness of the road heightens the sadness of that infantile psalmody which seems like a vow of humility, resignation, and poverty taken at the commencement of life. The old woman shuffles along in her clogs, which clatter on the stones in the road, and she sighs under the shawl thrown over her head. The grandchild sobs and shivers with the cold; his clothes are ragged. He is an albino lad, with sunburnt and freckled cheeks; over his forehead, like a slave of another age, his straight fair hair is closely cropped, suggesting fibres of maize.

In the livid sky of the dawning day still glimmer a few fading stars. A fox fleeing from the village dashes across the path. In the distance can be heard the barking of dogs and the crowing of cocks. . . . Slowly the sun begins to gild the crests of the hills; the dew sparkles on the grass; round the trees, in timid flights, circle the young birds that are leaving the nest for the first time; the streams laugh, the branches murmur, and that green-bordered road, sad and deserted, awakens like an old road of many seed-times and vintages. Flocks of sheep climb the slope of the hill; women come singing from the fountain; a white-haired villager goads his oxen as they stop to nibble by the fences. He is a

patriarchal old man; from a great distance his voice is heard:

"Are you going to the fair at Barbanzón?"

"We are going to San Amedio to find a master for the lad."

"How old is he?"

"Old enough to earn: he was nine in July."

And the grandmother and her grandchild go on walking, walking, walking. . . . Under the genial sun that shines over the hills the people of the villages pass along the roads. A merry, sunburnt horse-dealer trots along with a joyous clatter of spurs and hoofs; old women from Cela and Lestrove set out for the fair with chickens, flax, and rye. Over there, in the ravine, a rustic waves his arms and shouts to frighten the goats, which are jumping gracefully among the rocks. The grandmother and grandchild stand aside to make way for the rector of Lestrove, who is on his way to preach at a village festival.

"Good-morning and God bless you!"

The rector pulled up his horse, which had a quiet and dignified gait.

"Are you going to the fair?"

"We poor people have nothing to do at the fair. We are going to San Amedio to find a master for the lad."

"Does he know his Catechism?"

"Yes, sir, he knows it. Poverty does not prevent one being a Christian."

And the grandmother and her grandchild go on walking, walking, walking. . . . In the distant blue haze they descry the cypress trees of San Amedio, growing round the church, black and pensive, with their languid tops anointed by the early golden light. In the village every door is already open, and the wavering white smoke which rises from the chimneys vanishes into the air like a greeting of peace. The grandmother and her grandchild reach the porch. Seated in the doorway a blind man implores alms, and raises his whitish agate eyes to Heaven.

"May the blessed Saint Lucy preserve your good sight and health in this world to earn your bread! . . . May God give you to keep and to give! . . . Health and luck in the world to earn your bread! . . . So many good people of the Lord cannot pass without giving a poor man a trifle! . . ."

And the blind man holds out to the roadway his dry and yellow palm. The old woman approaches with her grandchild by the hand and murmurs sadly:

"We are poor people too, brother! . . . They told me you were looking for a servant. . . ."

"Quite true. The one I had before got his head broken at the pilgrimage of Santa Baya de Cela. He is quite silly now. . . ."

"I have brought my grandson."

"You have done well."

The blind man stretches out his arms, groping the air.

"Go nearer, boy."

The grandmother pushes the boy, who trembles like a gentle, timid lamb before that horrible old man, wrapped in a soldier's cape. The importunate yellow hand of the blind man rests on the boy's shoulders, gropes round his back, travels down his legs.

"Will you get tired carrying the packs uphill?"

"No, sir: I am used to it."

"To fill them we must knock at many doors. Do you know the village roads well?"

"Where I do not know, I ask."

"On the pilgrimages, when I sing a verse you have to respond with another. Will you be able to?"

"With practice, yes, sir."

"To be a blind man's servant is what many people would like."

"Yes, sir, yes."

"As you have come, let us go to Pazo de Cela. The people there are charitable. Here there is not a coin to be had."

The blind man rises stiffly and rests his hand on the shoulders of the boy, who looks sadly at the long road and over the green humid country, to where, in the distance, a labourer walks with his back bent as he cuts the grass, whilst a cow grazes quietly, dragging the halter. The blind man and the boy move slowly away, and the grandmother murmurs as she dries her eyes:

"Lucky boy! nine years old and earning the bread he eats! . . . Praised be God! . . ."

ELIAS ZEROLO

D. 1900

HER FATHER'S SLAVE

THE bay of Rio de Janeiro is one of the largest and most beautiful harbours in the world. Spacious enough to give ample anchorage to every fleet that sails, the bay is a veritable sea. Its shores are covered with that vigorous and variegated vegetation to be seen only in America and Asia. Many islands dot its noble bosom like colossal emeralds, and along its numerous little bays, which appear at first insignificant and look like mouths through which the vast interior of Brazil gets its aliment, are scores upon scores of wharves and docks, giving life and movement to the lovely panorama.

One day when I was crossing the bay to Nictheroy on the little steamer that serves as a ferry, I saw my excellent friend Señor Thussel. Thussel was a lawyer, the son of a French immigrant who had married a rich Brazilian heiress, and one of those political liberals who, without provoking any great outward disturbance, determine the real progress of the Brazilian people. Benevolent in his attitude toward the proceedings of the conservatives, he was firm and unyielding only where slavery was concerned, holding that with it there could be no temporising by the law. For him there existed only one solution of the difficulty: slavery's instant abolishment. Everything but that, Thussel would say heatedly, was infamous, an acknowledgment that man had the right to buy and sell his weaker and more unfortunate brothers and sisters.

He, invariably so gentle and kindly, treated every one who dared differ from him on the subject with the sternest reproach and greatest severity. So unyielding would he be that it seemed to his friends as if he must have felt upon his own shoulders, at some former time, the lash of the overseer's cruel whip.

His speech was slow and deliberate, and he chose his words carefully, striving for the utmost precision and elegance of diction, a habit very common among the best people of Rio de Janeiro. Always calm and careful in the debates at the Athenæum and in his favourite clubs, Dr. Thussel was instantly a different man when he discussed slavery. Then his bold features would wrinkle and his flashing eyes lighten ominously. He would clench his hands with a nervous, violently spasmodic action, and pour out with lightning

rapidity, in the most eloquent and moving tones, the iron-hard, bitter logic and passionate energy of his irrefragable arguments. His broad, humane ideas fell like hammer-strokes upon his opponent. Those who saw the man in such heated moments could not at all recognise the philanthropist with whom they were acquainted, so great was the change in him.

When I met him on the ferry-boat Thussel's face wore an unusually disturbed and sombre look, far from its customary suave air, and I knew something very serious must be on his mind. His greeting was gloomy, but I answered with a smile, and seating myself beside him, endeavoured as best I might to cheer him up. After a moment or two of silence, I asked what was troubling him.

In answer he rose, and signing me to follow, led to where a little knot of slaves stood huddled together in a detached, miserable group, clinging to each other, as if to find in the contact strength to withstand the misfortune which had overtaken them because of their black skins. Among them was one old fellow, far advanced in years, who held close to his breast a good-looking young girl; his tears were mingling with hers.

Thussel pointed at them with a sweeping gesture of despair, and we stood for a moment watching them silently.

"They are father and daughter, sold to different owners up-country," my friend said as we returned to our deck-chairs. "In a short time—when we reach Nictheroy—they will be separated. The law that permits such a thing is abominable!"

"Do you know the old man?" I asked, moved by his interest in the pair.

"No," he replied bitterly, "I do not. When I came aboard I heard the noise and inquired the reason for their weeping. After all," he added in ironic accents, "it is merely one of the legitimate consequences of present conditions. The owner of any article has the right to dispose of it as he sees fit. There is nothing wonderful about it." He paused for a moment, and then went on in a sadder tone: "It makes my blood boil to see the misfortunes of these poor creatures, beings who are gifted with minds, nourished like my own, with red blood. The sight of that poor old father and his daughter fairly turned me sick when I saw them first. It recalled to me a bloody drama in which certain members of my own family figured. It was many years ago, but you might recognise many of the characters, even without my naming them."

Thussel was silent for a moment, pressing his hands to his temples, but whether to collect his thoughts or to ease the pain of the hateful memory I did not know.

"Yes?" I said, eager to hear the story.

"Yes, I'll tell you about it, if you care to listen. Everybody

knows something about the miseries of slavery, but to hear a personal anecdote may impress the horrors of the traffic upon you for ever. There is time for the tale before we reach Nictheroy.

" My mother's family, with the exception of her elder brother, had always lived in Rio de Janeiro. The boy, a born adventurer, left the paternal roof when a mere child and made many trips into the wild interior of the empire. He had no particular reason for running away except that he was naturally restless and loved the extraordinary; but he was of a keenly money-making spirit, a most unusual quality in one so young. He had been in turn soldier, sailor, hunter and miner, but always making money. He did no one knows how many other things, until, after years of wandering, he settled down to the life of a steady-going business man in Pernambuco.

" Applying to his new venture his tireless activity and great intelligence, these qualities, with his encyclopædic knowledge of the country, gained at first hand during his wanderings, virtually assured success from the outset, and the house of Señor de Lima, as he chose to call himself, became in the course of a very few years one of the most respected and substantial firms in the metropolis.

" Only on the South American bourses and in the greater cities are fortunes thus built up. Our cities themselves are really nothing but huge exchanges. In both you will see the same vertiginous activity, with one thing in mind, one god at heart: gold—the idea of gain, the cult of the golden calf. On the other hand, however, the very fortunes which appear most solid and enduring not infrequently collapse at the slightest breath, like castles built of gamblers' cards. But you shall see.

" Steeped in this oppressive atmosphere of commerce, my uncle spent the best years of his life. Meditating on the futility of it all, his mind wandered back into the past. He remembered that there was someone in the world who could call him father, and he decided to live alone no longer.

" One day one of his female slaves presented herself to him, bearing a bundle in her arms.

" ' Your child, my master! ' she said with simple awe.

" My uncle looked at the little creature a moment, and charging the mother to bring her back when six years old, sent both to the Capivara *hacienda,* one of his most distant and inaccessible plantations. The negress reached Capivara safely, carrying a letter to the overseer. My uncle ordered the overseer not to put the woman at any hard work or to abuse her while she should continue to have the child at breast.

" The overseer's wife immediately took the slave and her pretty baby under her protection, and made the infant a Christian by

having her baptized Maria in the church nearest the *hacienda.* So fond did she become of the little one that she wished to adopt it for her own, begging her husband to try and have both mother and child freed. The overseer, though not a religious man by any means, was an indulgent husband, and agreed for his wife's sake. He saw nothing out of the way in such a request from his wife, and although a rude, coarse man, ordinarily thinking no more of the slaves than of the animals that did the heavy work about the plantation, he passed so many pleasant hours caressing and playing with the pretty creature that he permitted it to call him father when it at last began to lisp that sweet name.

"The poor slave mother was deeply grateful, but she was a mother first, and she looked upon these demonstrations of affection with some secret alarm and never let fall a single word or hint to indicate its father's identity.

"Four years passed, and she fell sick. Fearing to infect the *hacienda,* she ran away with the child, reaching my uncle at Pernambuco after untold suffering. The wretched woman told him she had come back to die, which proved to be true. My uncle was astonished at the exact likeness of the little girl's features to those of his sister, who afterward became my mother. It seemed as if Providence had given her the resemblance as a safe-conduct to his affections and to ensure his acknowledgment of her paternity.

"A few hours after the child reached his house he took her with him in a boat to Rio de Janeiro, placing her there in the care of some excellent ladies whom he charged with her education and religious training, but to whom he vouchsafed nothing as to her parentage or family.

"In Rio the young girl proved, by her intelligence and aptitude for study, the model of her school. When my uncle learned this later he had Maria come and live with him. She occupied the place of a legitimate daughter in his house, awakening in him sentiments and emotions long dormant and dulled.

"Maria was grateful to her father and showed her appreciation by her careful management of his domestic affairs and the interest she took in the slaves, who found in her—as if she were aware of her true origin—a friend and protectress for whose loving help they gave thanks every hour. She interested her indulgent father, who gratified her every whim, and obtained his permission to have the slaves knock off work an hour every day, during which she gave them instruction in morals as well as taught them their letters. The slaves very soon showed the benefit of this care and could easily be distinguished from other slaves by their cheerful willingness to work and their moderation in life.

"Maria's skin and complexion were so clear and fair that she would have passed in Europe for a white girl. Her large, full

eyes, shaded by long, silky lashes, showed their beauty and light modestly; a nose saucily retroussé; a small and gracious mouth which, when she laughed, revealed a perfect set of pearls; an oval head, crowned with a mass of soft black hair, dressed in exquisite taste, all showed Maria to be, not a statuesque beauty, nor yet the perfect type of female loveliness conceived by artists, but one of those ineffably lovely women, one of those peerless creoles who are the torment of half the human race. Added to her beauty and moral qualities there was the practical certainty of her inheriting my uncle's immense fortune, since every one believed her to be his legitimate daughter. She was, accordingly, welcomed heartily by Pernambuco society, and there was always a perfect cloud of those flies of fortune, suitors, hovering over and about her in the hope of winning her hand. Not one of them received the slightest encouragement; but so delicate and insinuating was her tact that she managed to keep them all her friends, who sounded her praises everywhere.

"One of them, however, persisted in his importunities. This was Señor Sousa, counted one of the richest bachelors in Pernambuco. He was one of the most vicious and avaricious of men, with a mind even more dulled than those who had made their money by slave-trading. In the possibility of a marriage with Maria he saw a means of largely increasing, by a single stroke, his own considerable fortune. For the girl he cared nothing, except in a merely sensual, animal way; it was her money and good looks he was after, and both for self-gratification only.

"All the suitors, however, were not like Sousa. Many of them, fairly eligible young fellows, were so entirely ignored that the more disappointed ones began to believe and to hint openly that Maria could not be heart-whole or free. And they were right. Maria loved Luis, a clerk of my uncle's, and Luis loved her with a passion that defied even death. Not a word had either spoken—indeed, that was not necessary, their eyes had spoken for them.

"Sousa was not the kind of man to be thwarted or crossed with impunity by any one. Accustomed always to having people bow before the weight of his gold, Maria's refusal inspired his base mind with a bitter desire for revenge. With a persistence and energy worthy of the Inquisition, he set himself to learn every minor detail of my uncle's past life. He could find nothing exceptionable, and it would seem as if his infamous designs were to be frustrated. But one day, while poring over a mass of papers in which he was eagerly reading a résumé of the life of the man he sought to injure, he was suddenly struck by the fact that no mention was made anywhere of Maria's mother. He began at once to suspect the worst. He started afresh, with renewed hopes, on his investigations. For some time his researches were without results. One

night, however, very late, he found himself, while travelling, in Capivara, an estate my uncle had sold ostensibly for the reason that it was profitless, but in reality because of business reverses.

" The overseer, who was much distressed that the new owner did not show him the same consideration which my uncle had always extended, praised the Señor de Lima in the highest terms. The Señor Sousa very artfully led him on and managed to turn the conversation upon the youthful and private life of my uncle, who, he said, was the only one of his friends of whom he knew nothing bad. The overseer then remembered that he had once suspected my uncle of an amorous intrigue, though he had made up his mind that he had been wrong. He told Sousa, omitting no detail, of Maria's strange arrival and of her even more mysterious departure four years later. Since that time he had not heard nor seen anything of either the child or the mother, and no one knew what had become of them.

" That was enough for so crafty a fellow as Sousa. Without allowing the overseer to suspect how valuable had been his information, the wily villain thanked the man and next day left the *hacienda,* changed his plans, and returned at once to Pernambuco.

" Some two weeks after he had arrived home Sousa might have been seen in his office before an enormous pile of books and papers, the examination of which occupied him several days. Had any one been about as he finished each book he would have heard Sousa talking to himself cheerily, expressing the keenest satisfaction. A broker interrupted him once in his labours to tell him regretfully that Señor de Lima's paper was no longer being taken on the Street, that no one would discount it in the market, and that it seemed probable that the present difficulties of the firm were due to their repeated recent heavy losses, which made failure appear inevitable. Sousa heard the news with a diabolical smile, and the broker on leaving heard him chuckle: ' What luck! '

" Fortune, which had hitherto smiled upon my uncle, seemed to have deserted him entirely. He was put to the necessity of suspending payments and calling an immediate meeting of his creditors. He thought that they, realising that his losses were not due to imprudence or lack of experience, and also remembering his personal probity and business intelligence, might accept conditions which would enable him to recoup his losses, tide over his difficulties, and eventually re-establish the credit of his house. He called the meeting and awaited the day on which he should face his creditors with a tranquil mind, having everything in readiness for them, with his plans all prepared.

" The hour of the meeting came, and the other creditors were gathered in the office, when Sousa entered and begged a moment's private conversation before they began the business of the day. He

and my uncle went into the next room. Sousa had called him out to urge again his suit for the hand of Maria, offering in exchange for the old man's consent and assistance the exercise of his powerful influence with the other creditors in order to obtain a favourable settlement. If the settlement were impossible, the schemer offered to place his entire fortune and business at my uncle's disposal. Instead of accepting the apparently generous offer, the old man reaffirmed briefly his previous reply and Maria's old refusal. Sousa insisted, begging for a chance to talk to her himself, urging that she might have changed her mind; but my uncle refused him that also, fearing that Maria, knowing the low condition of his affairs, might consent to sacrifice herself to a hateful union in order to save her father's good name.

" At the meeting my uncle did not succeed in getting his propositions accepted by the creditors. They seemed at first to be inclined in his favour and might have dealt leniently with him; but Sousa, who held three-fourths of the protested notes, opposed this in unstinted terms, eventually frightening the other creditors into agreeing with him. Though they could not understand why Sousa should unnecessarily expose himself to the loss of several *contos* of *reis* for the satisfaction to be gained by ruining an old man and his daughter, they followed his lead like sheep and the deed was done.

" A few moments later they adjourned to the Bankruptcy Court and placed the matter there. My uncle laid before the judge a complete inventory of his estate and goods. Sousa, at his own request, was permitted to examine the papers, and, seeing that among the list of slaves there was no such name as Maria, denounced the omission instantly, presenting the court with incontestable evidence and accusing my uncle of fraud in hiding something which really belonged to his creditors. He went even farther; he committed the infamy of making the court and the others suspect that De Lima maintained the fiction of having Maria pose as his daughter the better to sustain and cover up an illicit relation.

" In consideration of the bankrupt's personal condition and his estate, the court rendered judgment with the greatest haste and secrecy. The court's messengers, sent to find the missing slave, found my uncle with his daughter, who was trying to make light of the disaster and endeavouring to encourage the broken old man with hope for a new start. It was at this moment that the agents of the court appeared to notify him of the judge's decision and to take away his daughter, who, before the law, was nothing more than a piece of merchandise, nothing but a female slave, the property of rapacious creditors. Never had a man been so terribly punished for an oversight.

" I never knew just what happened at that painful moment; my uncle's mind became almost unhinged. The blow was terrible,

and, as he might have anticipated had he really known his man, Sousa added the insult of his presence before the sorrowing pair.

"For a long time we physicians and lawyers discussed among ourselves the effect the misfortune might have upon my uncle. At times he was seen to press his hands to his heart and shut his eyes quickly, his head thrown back. But he opened his eyes again and looked upon his persecutors in what seemed to be his normal condition—only he was practically insensible to his surroundings. He showed his usual energy in only one way: not even the law could separate him from his daughter, and he went with her to the pen where the other slaves had been quartered under guard.

"Maria received the fatal news with all a martyr's fortitude. Raising her eyes to heaven she implored the divine aid in a hasty prayer, kissing the hand of her father, who looked at her with the impassive stare of an idiot. The officials noticed that only in the moment when he drew her to him and put his arm about her waist to lead her where the constables indicated, did she weep at all or lose any of her sweet fortitude.

"Disgusting, repellent scenes occurred during the confinement of the slaves. Every day the infamous Sousa came to the pen to see them, and, as he said, to shelter father and daughter with his magnanimous protection, while really exposing them to the most humiliating indignities. And my uncle made not the slightest attempt to throttle the brute! The old man must undoubtedly have been driven into insanity by the inhuman treatment he received. But even the most excruciating agony must have an end, and at last the day of the sale ended—temporarily, at least—the slaves' confinement.

"Nothing more iniquitous can be imagined. Mere words and phrases do not exist to paint in its true reality and brutal cynicism that disgraceful outrage upon humanity called slave-trading.

"The buyer and seller present themselves in the market and submit the slaves to the most scrupulously rigid and searching examination on the stand from which the sale is made. The dealers calculate, with the cold, hard sense of a mechanic studying the condition of a complex and delicate machine, the animal strength and character of each of the poor wretch's members, and his or her more or less robust physical condition. If the merchandise happens to be female, it is pitiful and shameful beyond measure to witness the brutal examination, the poor woman standing practically naked, with quivering body and beating heart, before the prospective buyer, who is an interested and heartless spectator, the while the keen-eyed auctioneer points out the condition and health of those who are virgins and those who have been mothers, and those who, at times, are intended for a far more infamous traffic than mere

slavery, each according to her comeliness and the perfection of her body and form.

" My uncle's slaves, sane and robust, educated by her who they knew loved them and who now found herself among them, drew a large throng of buyers to the market. Perhaps, also, the intending buyers were in great measure attracted by a morbid wish to see the unfortunate Maria exposed for sale. She and her father stood a little apart from the black mass of the rest, and inspired a deep sympathy in the blunted consciences of even those who had come to take an active part in the sale. And the sympathy, by reason of its disinterestedness, extended to the other slaves as well, so that none of the buyers exposed them to the usual indignities or annoyances. Sousa alone showed the most callous indifference. He approached Maria and made as if he would feel and examine her body and limbs with his own hands. But the other slaves covered her with their bodies, and an ominous murmur of vengeance went surging up from the solid black bodyguard, causing him to step back hastily with a bitter curse.

" Maria alone failed to sell. No one seemed willing to take the responsibility of separating her from her father. The auctioneer shouted himself hoarse, proclaiming her beauty and virtues in stentorian tones as the ashamed girl stood forth, clad as lightly as possible, before the leering, pitying, curious, sympathetic assembly. But at last the bidding was started.

" Various low offers were made, the girl's price rising rapidly, *peso* by *peso,* and there were many who would really have liked to own her, once their scruples, faint enough at best, had been overcome. But to all these bids there was but one reply, and Sousa made it in golden words. From time to time the auctioneer announced the higher bid until they were almost convinced that they could achieve nothing against so formidable an antagonist as the determined scamp who was doing most of the bidding. His rivals somewhat too quickly abandoned the field to the crafty Sousa, who showed his evident satisfaction at securing his bargain so easily. But a new bidder suddenly stepped out of the crowd, and for the first time the poor girl showed some interest. It was Luis, formerly one of my uncle's best clerks. He began by overbidding the previous price, and once more the contest was in full swing, with the crowd pressing forward and craning necks to enjoy the struggle. Sousa grinned at the youth with an evil, sour grin, and the price rose steadily by leaps and bounds as each named a new figure. The auctioneer rubbed his hands with pleasure and egged on the bidders to greater efforts. The battle of the *pesos* raged until Luis had bid to the limit of his unfortunately too small resources.

" Maria the slave girl brought really an amazing price, and was finally knocked down to the highest bidder, the malevolent Sousa,

whose satyr face and working lips told of his hellish intentions even more plainly than had his wild bidding. But he was not destined to defile my uncle's pretty lamb nor to pollute the virgin beauty of her innocence.

" As the auctioneer shouted the result of the sale, Luis, with a broad, long-bladed, heavy knife in his hand, threw himself violently upon her, and the innocent Maria fell, her snowy bosom almost cloven in two by the force of the terrible blow."

I sat breathless, waiting for the rest, but Thussel maintained a moody silence. I knew there must be more to the story, so, after waiting respectfully a moment, I inquired: " What happened to Luis? "

" He got away," replied Thussel sadly, " and managed to escape the vengeance of both the law and Sousa. Under another name he went to Paraguay, entered the army, and began a most distinguished career. Absolutely ignorant of fear, his reckless daring became a byword among officers and men, and he died at last just as his troops were achieving a famous victory."

Thussel stopped again, seemingly unwilling to go on, but I knew he had still something to tell, though I realised that he must do it in his own way. " Ah, well," he said at last, " you can see in this tragedy simply a recurrence of the old Roman story which stirred the Eternal City to its foundations. Virginius assassinated his daughter for the same reason that urged Luis to kill Maria. The centuries pass, but they bring the same tragedies with them over again, and the tragedies bring the same results and cause the same poignant griefs every time. When the tree is the same, does any one idly wonder what the fruits will be like? But perhaps this was a little different. The real murderer, Maria's father, was not punished——"

" Her father! " I cried, amazed beyond expression. " Her father! I thought you said that Luis killed her! "

Thussel smiled wearily.

" Yes—killed by her father, indeed! Luis struck the blow, it is true, but he was simply the weapon, the machine. My uncle had commanded him to do it! His daughter should never be a slave. Should she be sold, Luis was to slay her with one swift, painless stroke! My uncle——"

But the rattle and clamour of the sliding gang-plank, the shouts of the deck-hands, the cries of the slaves, and the roar of escaping steam as the boat drew alongside the Nictheroy wharf, drowned Thussel's words, and I never heard the fate of his uncle.

CARMEN DE BURGOS

B. 1878

FLOWERING HEATHER

Not far from Alcira, in southern Spain, shut off from the high-road, nestling in a delicious bit of ground and sheltered by spreading trees, stands a little white cottage which makes the traveller long from a distance for its graceful vine-arbours, where the leaves of the bindweed interlace with the tendrils of the grape vine. Here the rays of a fiery sun wrap the earth in the glowing embrace which engenders life.

The fields presented all the varied golden tints of harvest time; amongst their green tangles of leaves the vines were beginning to show their closely clustered bunches of grapes; the date-palms bravely shook their fruit-laden branches and in the atmosphere floated aromatic and intoxicating odours of vitality. This vivifying breath of nature penetrated the fragile and fatigued organism of Mercedes, filling her blood with oxygen, giving her renewed life.

Mercedes was the owner of the landed property. She was a charming young orphan girl of eighteen years of age, of a delicate constitution and worn out by the constant excitement of social festivities at court.

Now, her existence had undergone an indefinable change. The surrounding atmosphere of love and fecundity, which enwrapped her and renewed her health, at the same time wrought upon her imagination. The young girl, whom her physicians' prescriptions obliged to remain here, began to dream of some enamoured swain, very distinct indeed from the country louts who surrounded her.

Imagination, however, will perform miracles in the heads of romantic maidens. Mercedes had never loved, and, like all lovely and admired women, she had so far worshipped only at the shrine of her own beauty. One day she found a branch of blooming heather fastened to the iron railing of her window. The newly budded tiny flowers flaunted their pretty pink, and the dewdrops gleamed in their petals like powdered diamonds.

In the evening, when they were all assembled under the grape-arbour, Mercedes asked who had brought her the flowers, and

Manuel, a lad of twenty who worked in the vineyard, confessed with a shaking voice, twisting his old hat in trembling fingers, that it was he who had picked the flowers for the lady, showing his hands all torn by the spikes of the tough little shrub.

A peculiar sympathy awoke in the heart of the young woman, who found herself the mistress of the poor fellow's soul, well pleased with his passion and the secret homage he devoted to her. Henceforward Mercedes kept the lad at her side under all sorts of pretexts, not without causing considerable comment in the observant vicinity.

On each and every day Manuel would bring her branches of blooming heather, with which she contrived strange adornments for herself. Her blue-black hair, interwoven with the tiny pink flowers and small green leaves, gave her a strange aspect and made her eyes shine with greater brilliancy. A necklace of the same flowers increased the delicate pallor of her skin, and bunches of heather scattered capriciously here and there on her floating white garments lent her the looks of a Druid priestess in the depths of her sacred grove.

The kindness of Mercedes, and her smiles, encouraged Manuel; and their friendship assumed the form of an idyll in which the great lady condescended to her rustic swain, making him sweet promises of love, which filled the boy's whole life. She did not reflect seriously upon the situation. With his bronzed skin, his regular energetic features, and his large and expressive eyes, Manuel appeared handsome to her; his ardent and savage wooing, converted into a respectful homage, flattered her vanity. At his side she felt less bored—but that was all.

One day Mercedes went with all the farm-hands on a pilgrimage to a neighbouring shrine. She sat merrily enthroned amongst the girls, waiting with impatience for the moment in which Manuel would join them. But amongst the visitors at the feast there were some friends of hers, who spoke to her of the world she had forgotten in the recesses of her sequestered nook, and the wave of memory rushed over her, brimming with gaiety and pleasure.

In her endeavour to shake off this impression she sought Manuel with her eyes, and at last discovered him, not daring to approach her in his rustic bashfulness. Mercedes would have called him, but she refrained. She felt ashamed of him. What would her friends say? She the sweetheart of one of her menials!

She looked again at Manuel. How homely he was! Buttoned up in a thick cloth jacket, a red handkerchief drawn through a metal ring knotted around his neck, clumsy cow-hide boots which hampered his movements—she wondered how she could ever have thought the fellow good-looking.

The return trip was a gloomy one. Mercedes appeared absent-minded, and not a single time did her eyes seek those of Manuel. She understood that their relations had gone too far; and that very day, most rapidly and unexpectedly, she completed arrangements for her return to Madrid.

A year has passed; we are in the elegant boudoir of the city house inhabited by Mercedes. The young woman is reclining in an easy-chair, and before her, pale and trembling, stands Manuel, in whom it is difficult to recognise the light-hearted youth of Alcira.

" How pleased I am to see you! " she said to him with feigned cordiality. " Tell me how you are and give me the news of the village."

When he made no reply, she added: " Do not worry, my lad; I have sent for you because I am thinking of getting married. My husband may have to go up there on business, and I do not want him to know—you understand what I mean. That was a piece of folly, and I could no more have resigned myself to being a farmer's wife than you would ever make a fine gentleman. But do not get angry—listen to reason—you shall be inspector of the property and manage it in your own way. You ought to get married yourself. Above all, never tell any one about that ridiculous child's play! "

" I understand, Señorita Mercedes. You may be sure that you will not be molested," was all that Manuel managed to say, as he abruptly left the room.

Mercedes, startled by his expression of suffering, murmured uneasily to herself: " How seriously he must have taken it! " In eternal feminine vanity and selfishness, she added, triumphantly: " He loves me still, and Luis will never know! "

" Yes, beloved Luis," said Mercedes two days later to her fiancé, " I have had a great shock. The inspector of Alcira has been run over by an electric car—an incredible piece of stupidity —stood gaping in the middle of the street! "

" It is indeed a sad and deplorable accident, but I see no particular reason for you to grieve about it. What are you holding in your hand there? "

" A bunch of wild flowers which the unfortunate man charged them to deliver to me, when they picked him up dying."

" What a strange gift! "

" He had brought them for me from Alcira, because during my stay there he used to present me with these flowers, knowing my fondness for them."

" And maybe you had been flirting with him, just to keep your hand in? However, such sins are too trivial to count. Throw

the stuff away and do not let us think any more about the matter! "

" How good you are, my Luis, and how much I love you! " said she, throwing the heather branch into the fire, which crackled noisily, whilst a column of white smoke slowly arose in the air, exhaling a pungent perfume of flowering fields.

JUAN DE DIOS PEZA

19TH CENTURY

LA MULATA

MORE than two hundred years ago there lived in Córdoba—that beautiful, gardenia-scented garden-spot of Vera Cruz, in Mexico—a mysteriously beautiful woman, whose eyes must surely have caught their burning blackness from the rays of the hot African sun. Yet she was fair as a lily, showing that she was also a daughter of the white race. No one knew what her parentage was. People who had looked upon the curling blackness of her magnificent hair, her rounded voluptuous form with its undulating tiger-like grace of movement, and her full red lips, called her La Mulata, suspecting that she was the daughter of Spanish and African parents.

No one knew whence she came, and in those days of the dark and dread Inquisition there were many secret doings and many mysteries. But innumerable rumours were abroad in the village concerning her, some saying in hushed tones that so versed was La Mulata in the occult sciences that even the powers of the air were obedient to her will, and malignant spirits hastened to do her bidding; that during the tranquil hours of the night, when only the voice of the watchful cock broke the silence, the sweeping of heavy wings could be heard over the Mulata's house; demoniacal sights, not meant for the eye of mortal man, could be seen, had one the valour to watch; and that even the devil himself, in the form of a dark, saturnine man of great beauty, took human form to visit her.

Terrible and weird were the tales told of the mysterious Spanish-African beauty. More than one crazed or dying person had been found near the small house in which she lived, retired and alone. One luckless being—a night watchman—was found dying of fright and unable to speak of what he had seen. His screams and convulsions, upon being commanded to tell what had injured him, were awful; and his one coherent plea was that he be allowed to die without speaking.

Other men, who passed too near to the palms and orange-trees which curtained her house entrance, had been found dumb and

paralysed afterwards. Truly, a terrible and mysterious power had this beauteous Mulata, while her fascination drew to her any man, of whatever station, who once looked upon her.

The people suspected the woman; her every action was watched, and her every word occasioned trepidation. But unless one had the courage to watch her house at midnight (which the Virgin and all the Saints forbid!) there was nothing upon which to base her condemnation. Quiet and tranquil was her behaviour when abroad; no native Mexicana frequented the Church more than did she, and her downcast eyes and modest mien could not but quiet slander, and stop the most malevolent tongue.

Only the Alcalde (mayor), who was of the greatest good-fame and authority in the village, could not still his doubts, but swore to himself that she was indeed a woman of the strongest magic. And yet the village knew that he was no fair judge, nor yet an impartial one; for despite his many years and grey hair, the Alcalde had conceived so violent, so overpowering a passion for this fair woman of mystery that he could not rest, eat, nor sleep for thinking upon it. In vain did he endeavour to suppress, to throttle his love —it could not be done! The more he struggled to forget her, the more did he remember; and at last, driven by an irresistible force, he went to La Mulata, and humbly confessed his love.

It was in vain. Nothing—neither promises nor entreaties, the offer of princely gifts, tears, the oath of constancy—could move this woman, so fair of face and so hard of heart. Utterly in vain were the Alcalde's entreaties, for she would give him not even one ray of hope.

Then the Alcalde vowed that he would ignore her; meet her disdain with disdain. In vain: for even the sight of her in the far distance set his elderly heart aflame. The more he wished to forget her, the more did he remember: he prayed to hate her, and could only idolise! In his moments of calmness he could not explain to himself this consuming passion: not taking into account the human weakness, which is always the slave of reason, he concluded that it was no human love which so inflamed his soul and mind, but that he must be instead in the toils of a witch, an enchantress, who had been sent to him by the devil.

In such a case, thought Don Martin de Ocaña, there was but one remedy—and that the "Holy Office." Only through the Inquisitors could he rid himself of this woman of magic and her infernal wiles.

Once arrived at this terrible decision, the Alcalde did not hesitate: with a steady hand he wrote the denunciation which was to be the death-knell of the beautiful Mulata; with firmness and precision he recounted the rumours which filled the village, and the terrible situation in which he himself was placed, entreating

also—which was unnecessary, for the Holy Office dearly loved a new victim—that the Señores Inquisitors make speed and haste in delivering his village of this dread enchantress, the "Mulata of Córdoba!"

During the calm of the midnight hours, it seemed to the Mulata, alone in her palm-shaded house, that the quiet night had been profaned by strange noises: there was the sound of loud tones, the tramping of many feet.

From her window she heard voices, approaching nearer and nearer: there were moving torches, and strange shadows cast in their wake: soon there came into view guards and horsemen, apparently making toward her solitary house. At their head she recognised Don Martin, the Alcalde, on his prancing white charger. She smiled and waited.

Reaching her house, the cortège halted; the place was surrounded by guards: a "Bando" (proclamation) of the "Holy Office" was read in a loud voice, that all might hear; and a command was then shouted to the Mulata de Córdoba to come forth and surrender herself to the officers, a prisoner of the Inquisition.

But La Mulata did not obey. Enveloping her form in a white mantle, she stole through a rear door, past the frightened guards, and soon gained the open meadow behind the house. Here awaited her a man whose features were obscured by his large sombrero, but whose eyes scintillated in the darkness as though phosphorescent. The ample folds of his mantle did not suffice to disguise his tall and splendid form. He held the reins of two chargers.

Upon one of them leaped the Mulata, and with a jeering laugh the strange man flung himself upon the other as both steeds sprang forward; their hoofs flashed fire and they whinnied in wild, unearthly fashion. Straight for the Alcalde and his troops they made. There was wild uproar, the woman laughing loudly as her charger leaped and pranced in the midst of the bewildered men.

"The witch," they cried. "Sorceress! Stop! Retrace your steps! After her, men!"

In the wild confusion the guards ran into each other: Don Martin was jostled in a manner most unbefitting his rank as Alcalde, and of course the culprit escaped.

Soon the horsemen, with Don Martin leading, were on the enchantress's trail: in the distance they could see the flutter of her white mantle, and the phosphorescent sparks that were struck from the horses' feet. The pursuing horsemen crossed themselves as they watched, and more than one of them entreated Don Martin not to set them to pursuing demons—for what earthly horse could so cast fire from his hoofs?

But the Alcalde set his teeth, and merely bade his men gallop

the faster, so that this witch could the sooner grace the "hogueras" (bonfires) of San Lazaro.

Soon it seemed that the chargers of the fugitives were tiring, or else their riders. Close in front fluttered the white mantle of the woman, and the hearts of the pursuers beat with renewed hope. Fast and faster they spurred, the Alcalde leading; another step, and he could seize the mantle itself. At that moment the woman's horse gave a furious leap, and the clouds of dust that arose momentarily blinded the pursuers.

When they could penetrate the darkness sufficiently to distinguish the two fleeting forms, they were far out of reach, and jeering laughter floated back—which in no way allayed the dismay and chagrin of the Alcalde.

Furiously he ordered a halt, and while his men rested and muttered over the uselessness of riding down sorceresses, Don Martin reflected. He was persuaded that the Mulata and her mysterious companion were demons in human form, and therefore useless to chase: the memory of their jeering laughter upset his saner reflections, and then with an oath he ordered his followers to gallop anew in the pursuit.

Hours later the Alcalde stopped his exhausted horse and gazed uncertainly about him. One man after another had dropped behind in the chase, until now he found himself alone, his horse half dead, in a dense, dark forest from which he could see no egress —nay, he could not even distinguish the path he had just followed! There was only one thing to do: travel on, and he forced his tired horse into the forest.

He had long ago given up all hope of reaching or apprehending the Mulata. Judge, therefore, of his surprise when he suddenly beheld the woman herself, on her great horse, not far in front of him, and evidently awaiting his approach. Both she and her pawing charger were as fresh as they had been at the beginning of the chase, whereas the Alcalde was almost worn-out, and his stout animal in like condition.

Behind the witch, half obscured by dense bushes, was her sombre companion of the night before, his face still hidden by his sombrero, and his form shrouded by the heavy cloak.

As the Alcalde gasped and rubbed his eyes, believing that he was dreaming, the Mulata spoke, and her voice was soft and sweet.

"Enough, Don Martin de Ocaña! Are you now convinced that you can never reach me? Though you pursued for years, you could never do so. I would ask your pardon for last night's work but for your cruel persecution of me. And now, return to Córdoba, where I also go, to be imprisoned."

As she ceased speaking, and before the Don could recover from the stupor of astonishment into which her words threw him, she

leapt her horse past him, followed by the stranger; there was the sound of galloping hoofs, and then silence reigned once more throughout the great forest.

Again rubbing his eyes, Don Martin dropped his tired head upon his breast and allowed the white charger to take his own way back to Córdoba.

Great was the sensation in Mexico when it became known that the " Holy Office," in a late session, had sentenced " La Mulata de Córdoba " to be burned to death. It was furthermore rumoured on all sides that on account of the great beauty and wickedness of the prisoner the occasion would be a very great one, such as to leave memories to all who witnessed it.

Meanwhile, in a dark dungeon, entered only through dreary subterranean passages where the light of day never reached, nor rumour from the outside world, the Mulata paid the penalty of her " malicious and inhuman heresies," as the Holy Office designated them. Valiantly did the Inquisitors labour to bring her back to the straight road and to confess one by one her atrocious crimes. With this worthy end in view, the good doctors came and went in that dismal dungeon, without success. For what could they do with the fair woman whose only confession was, that *in any difficulty or danger the devil himself aided and abetted her?*

To-morrow was to be the Mulata's last day on earth; and even now the slaves, under their Spanish task-masters, were driving the stakes and making ready for the fire which was to reduce to ashes that lovely body.

Once more it was the midnight hour. La Mulata slept tranquilly; and, forgetting that she was in the cells of the Inquisition, dreamed that she slept in her palm-shaded house, her body covered with flowers.

A stealthy noise startled her from her sleep; and she listened, as slow footsteps crept cautiously down the passage leading to her miserable cell; nearer and nearer they came: a key grated in the lock, and the heavy door swung back on its hinges.

Frightened, she cowered against the wall, as the gaoler entered, bearing a rush-light; and behind him came the youngest of the Inquisitors—one whom they said would become the next Viceroy.

The old gaoler, putting down the light, went out of the cell; and the Inquisitor spoke, his eyes burning, his voice hoarse and tremulous:

" Listen, beautiful one: it has come to this! For more than ten nights I have sought you, to offer you life and liberty in exchange for nothing more than your love. Nine times, overcome with shame, I have gone away. Now, I am here. Know that ever since you were brought before the Tribunal I have loved you with a love hardly human, more like a devouring flame. Come with me, to

liberty. I am rich, and we will pass our lives where no one will know your history, not even your name. I love you! When I am with you, and your glorious eyes gaze upon me, I forget even God and my duty, and my soul remembers only you. Give me your love—come with me, and we will exchange this miserable dungeon for the most splendid of palaces. My adored one, come with me."

"Sir, such noble thoughts as yours I do not merit. How can you, an hidalgo of a princely house, condescend to me, the enchantress whom the people hold in horror: a sorceress at whom the children cry out in terror?"

"Because I adore you; and I hold you in my thoughts as high as the Empress is held, whom all delight to honour. You are all in all to me: I pray you, tell me that you love me!"

"No! And though I know that you will be angry, and that my death will be hastened, I will not deceive you. No more words of love, sir, will I hear from your lips. I bid you farewell."

Trembling, pallid as the dead, the youngest Inquisitor arose, his glowing eyes fixed on the enchantress.

"It is well, heartless one," he cried. "You will suffer for this. Why have you bewitched me with your unearthly beauty, why have you led me to such an end? It were unmanly to say more to you, as you are; but when you come to the stake, you will remember this night, and what I offered you!"

Grasping the light, he turned from her, and was about to leave the cell when the Mulata detained him. Softly she said:

"Though it will anger you, sir, answer me one question before you go. If you respond as I wish, then I will listen to your words; aye, will even love you."

"Speak; what is the question?" cried the Inquisitor.

"Do you, sir, see this barque which I have drawn with charcoal on the wall here? What is the one thing it needs? Answer that!"

The youngest Inquisitor studied the picture, which, the more he studied, seemed to grow larger and more perfect. It needed nothing, yet he feared to speak.

"What does it need? Answer me," insisted the Mulata.

"It is perfect: it only seems to need one to direct it," hazarded the unhappy Inquisitor.

"That is not the answer, but now it will have some one to direct it," said the witch; and as she spoke, she stepped to the wall. As in a dream, the Inquisitor saw the wall disappear: the ship grew larger and larger: waves rocked it gently to and fro, and the breezes filled its large sails. As in a dream, the Inquisitor saw the Mulata kiss her hand to him from its deck, and then the barque began to move, slowly at first, then fast, and faster: it was far gone now, gone for ever.

Many years after the Inquisition, an old man, who looked even older than he was, wandered in the streets, hopelessly crazed. No one knew him, and he did not know his own name. He was confined in an asylum for the insane, where he babbled unceasingly of a barque that one night sailed from a prison-cell to a far port, carrying the woman he loved.

It was the youngest Inquisitor, who was to have been the next Viceroy, and whose high-born family mourned him as dead.

As for La Mulata, she was never seen again, nor even heard of, save in the old-world legends that one hears sometimes from the " gente de la calle " (people in the street). So it is supposed that the devil at last took her, and that no more will her wiles enchant and destroy poor mortal men.

THE PORTUGUESE STORY-TELLERS

PORTUGAL is a country that has lost her former grandeur, her material inheritance, yet retained in her literature an intellectual heritage infinitely richer than many greater nations can boast. But in Portugal the short story has never achieved anything like that perfection of form to which it has attained in neighbouring Spain, and, still more, across the Pyrenees. There are various reasons for this. The chief may be that the short story has been developed most notably in countries where the demands of a popular press have made writing in that form profitable, and Lusitania has never been a paradise for professional authors. Hence, we find in Portuguese tales a curious amateurishness—or, at least, the average short story discloses certain crudities when "done into English." Then the romantic influence is paramount in Portuguese fiction, and this is no help to the art of the short story. It will be noticed that in most of the examples in the following collection this feeling for romance is insistent, and that the authors are really attempting to do in a brief space what demands much more extended treatment. Thus the "amateur touch."

Alexandro Herculano (1810–1877) is one of the most admired of Portuguese authors. There is practically no form in which he did not at least experiment, and as one of the leaders, with Almeida Garret, of the romantic movement, he is well represented in "The Village Priest." "The Last Bull-fight in Salvaterra," by Rebello da Silva (1822–1871), admirably told, and well poised in the matter of narration, also shows this romantic interest. Yet is it an effective story, presenting a

memorable page from history. The author at one time held the post of Minister of Marine, but retired from politics owing to a literary man's dislike of that dusty arena. " Good Example," by Brito Aranha (1833–1914), is really a romance in little, and is instinct with a very native charm. The temptation to moralise, or to write tractates in the form of brief fictions, is another of the failings of the Portuguese, although this has sometimes the merits of its defect. For instance, " The Greater Burden " of Rodrigo Paganino (1835–1863) gives an example of ethical purpose in no wise destructive to the artistic quality of the medium ; the story is not weakened by the moral it carries. Again, in " The Fisherman of Lessa da Palmeira," by Julio Cesar Machado (1835–1890), we have another admired author endeavouring to convey in some five thousand words the pith of a little tragic romance that might well have held the readers through a far longer story.

Here another native characteristic claims notice, namely, the spirit of place. There is, with nearly all the Portuguese writers, so strong a desire to create an " atmosphere " before telling their story that the atmosphere often calls for more description than the action. This, also, is a direct fault of the romantic temperament, which requires space for the development of its action and its actors, and the effect in the short story is to make the parts disproportionate. Theophilo Braga (1843–1924), who became the first President of the Portuguese Republic, was a scholar of wide attainments and erudition. In his long career as an active author he added considerably to Portuguese literature, and on every subject he touched he wrote with distinction. His short stories are few, and chiefly of the fantastic type to which " The Great Clock of Strassburg " belongs.

Eça de Queiroz (1843–1900) is by many esteemed the most distinguished of Portuguese modern imaginative writers. As a novelist, his works have enjoyed great popularity, both within the limited area of his native land and in the wider Portuguese field of Brazil. Various works of Eça de Queiroz have been translated into English, and a famous piece of his, " The Sweet Miracle," was published in a separate English translation in 1916. This is not included here, as it is not really a short story. The theme of " The Three Brothers and the Treasure " is obviously very ancient, but the manner of the telling is masterly, and it competes with " The Last Bull-fight in Salvaterra " for recognition as the best of all Portuguese short stories. In " Her Son," by Fialho d'Almeida (1857–1911), we have a little masterpiece of the tragic vein, while Affonso Botelho's " The Cup of Tea " affords a timely touch of comic relief, for which Portuguese literature is by no means remarkable.

As the short-story form has been less developed in Portuguese than in any of the other Latin literatures, with which, as a whole, the Portuguese can compete on fairly equal terms, it is not to be expected that we should find any remarkable development among the Brazilian writers, who, in all matters of art and culture, orient towards the mother-country, as the Spanish-Americans to Spain. The only Brazilian tale here chosen is by an author very famous in his native land, and justly admired among the Portuguese—Joaquim Maria Machado de Assiz (1839–1908). "The Sick Nurse" is representative of his work, showing remarkable power in the portrayal of character and the conveying of an "atmosphere."

J. A. H.

ALEXANDRO HERCULANO

1810–1877

THE VILLAGE PRIEST

THE village was prettily situated on the slope of a mountain, with a stream running through it down to the sea. Almost the highest house in it was the presbytery, but still higher stood the church, as if it were guardian of the parish at its feet. It was built in the mixed style of Moorish and Renaissance, like so many of the churches of Portugal, which furnish a proof that the noble conquerors of India did not return from the East with empty hands. For in those days devotion was a matter of luxury, and to build a church was a proof of wealth equivalent to having a country seat, a yacht, and a racing stable in these less pious times.

But if the church was rich, the village was poor, and the good parish priest led a hard life of solitary work—for he had no curate —and of self-sacrifice. How poor he was, perhaps no one really knew, except his old housekeeper Jeronyma. For many times he dined on bread and coffee when he had given help to some one in the parish in time of sudden need. He had a little field which he tilled himself, and the corn and vegetables from which served for his scanty table.

Down in the valley, in a little cottage by the stream, lived the village laundress, Perpetua Rosa, an industrious creature, who looked after the clean linen of the parish in return for a humble livelihood. She had one daughter, Bernardina, who aided her in her work, and who was said to be the prettiest girl not only in the parish but in a dozen parishes round.

Be that as it may, when Bernardina came along the little path leading from her mother's cottage with her basket of clean clothes balanced on her head, two or three young fellows would mysteriously appear as if they had sprung from the ground, to help her with her burden, and when she was seen to enter the barn where dancing took place on festival days with the goodwill and approval of the parish priest, the hearts of the other girls sank before the prospect of being partnerless, at least until Bernardina had made her choice of all the likely young fellows at the dance. But of all the lads who flocked round her, the one who made her heart beat

most quickly was Manuel da Ventosa. And this was the poor girl's greatest trouble.

For Manuel da Ventosa was certainly too great a catch to be seriously dreamed of by the daughter of a poor village washerwoman. His father, Bartholomeu da Ventosa, was a rich miller, a decent and honest man, every one agreed, but possessed by ten thousand devils of avarice. He owned two mills and several farms, and he looked for a wife for his son who would enable him to add to his wealth. And much as Manuel admired Bernardina, he feared his father more.

Not only was Perpetua Rosa very poor, but she had the misfortune to be in the miller's black books for another reason. One day when she was doing the washing for the mills she had the bad luck to lose three old torn sacks. The miller almost died of rage. He told every one that the sacks were new, and swore that Perpetua Rosa would have to replace them. And he took his washing away from her and sent it to a woman who lived in the next village. Needless to say, he forbade Manuel to speak to the daughter of the poor laundress or even to approach her at dances.

So matters stood one afternoon when the parish priest, walking round the church and reading his breviary, happened to glance in at the open door, and there, kneeling in the shaft of crimson light cast by the great rose window, a muslin scarf draping her fair head, was Bernardina, sobbing as if her heart would break. And the good priest did not need to be told the reason, for only that day Jeronyma had mentioned in her morning gossip, as she served his breakfast, that the miller was about to ask the hand of a rich farmer's niece in the next parish for his son Manuel.

The priest continued his walk, but the breviary was closed and his eyes were fixed on the ground. He was so wrapped in his meditations that, to the horror of Jeronyma, who was watching him from the presbytery garden, when the Angelus rang, he did not kneel down or even remove his hat, but continued to walk round as though the sacristan were not pulling energetically at the rope in the belfry. Jeronyma made the sign of the cross, and hoped the priest was not going wrong in his mind by some malice of the devil. He had seemed rather odd that morning, and had left his breakfast, which he usually enjoyed, almost uneaten.

It was long past nightfall when the good old man returned to the presbytery. Never within the memory of man had he been known to have his supper so late. And after supper, Jeronyma heard him walking up and down his modest sitting-room, repeating over and over again:

"Nothing did I bring into this world, and nothing can I take away from it."

Next morning the old priest rose with the sun, and called to

eronyma, who was lighting the fire, that she was to hurry with is breakfast, for he was going out early. When he appeared, she aw that he had some important call to make, for he wore his best at and carried his silver-headed walking-stick, the one article of uxury which he possessed.

The housekeeper set the coffee to boil and began making some otato cakes to give her reverend master a hot breakfast before his valk. She also put a couple of eggs in the pan to tempt his appetite.

As soon as he entered the sitting-room, the priest opened a ocked cabinet and pulled out a drawer. From it he took a thin olded sheet of crisp paper.

"Jeronyma! Come here, Jeronyma!"

"Breakfast is almost ready, sir. If your Reverence will have a noment's patience."

"It isn't that, woman. Here is a note for fifty dollars. Take t to Agostinho's shop and change it into gold for me."

"Yes, sir. But—where did it come from? There was no bap- ism or funeral yesterday, and you never have such a big fee as his."

"Eve will never be dead while you are alive, most inquisitive of vomen!" exclaimed the priest, laughing amid his pretended anger.

"Your pardon, sir. I meant no offence. I will do as you ell me."

And still staring at the priest in wonder, she extended her hand overed with the corner of her apron, not to soil the spotless note.

But when the priest had received his fifty dollars in gold and Jeronyma came in with the tray containing the coffee, eggs, and otato cakes, she suffered a still greater shock, which nearly resulted n her dropping the tray and leaving her reverend master break- astless.

The fifty dollars lay on the table in two rows, and the priest was dding others to them, which he took from a leather pouch. Nor lid he stop until a hundred gold pieces gleamed on the table in the norning sunshine.

"Not a word about this, Jeronyma, until I give you leave to peak," he enjoined. And when he put on his hat and left the resbytery after making a good breakfast, his housekeeper heard im repeating to himself:

"Nothing did I bring into this world, and nothing can I take way from it."

The miller stood at the door of one of his mills, superintending he loading of some mules with sacks of flour for the neighbouring own. He was in very bad humour, and he rated his boys oundly for their slowness at work. Suddenly the rap of a stick n his shoulder made him turn round.

"What? Your Reverence here so early! . . . You young

ass, can't you put that sack on top of the other two? . . . Your Reverence is welcome. Has anything happened? . . . May the devil fly away with you! Don't you see you will break my rope? . . . Come in, your Reverence."

"Yes, Bartholomeu," replied the priest. "Something has happened. I have been priest of this parish for forty years, and this is the first time that such a thing did happen. It is a difficult thing to settle, and I have come down to ask your advice, because I know you are a prudent man."

The priest sat on a stool which stood at the mill desk, and the miller took his place on a sack of wheat opposite. Both old men measured each other with their eyes for a moment in silence, as if each was trying to penetrate the other's thoughts. The priest was considering how to begin what he had to say, while the miller was wondering if his pastor was contemplating some festival and had come to ask him for a money contribution. He began to invent a dozen falsehoods to avert such a calamity.

"My friend," said the priest at last, "I have a good sum of money here with me; a hundred gold pieces of five dollars each, which have been entrusted to me by a pious person as a dowry for a poor girl of this parish. I have undertaken to make the selection, but it is not easy, so I have come to ask the aid of your judgment. I know you are an honest man, Bartholomeu, though a trifle niggardly. . . ."

"Don't believe that, your Reverence," exclaimed the miller, red with anger under the flour which powdered his cheeks. "That is what the evil tongues of the village say because I do not throw away my hard-earned money on them. May the devil fly away . . ."

"There, there," interrupted the priest. "Never mind what people say. Let us keep to what we ourselves have to say. Now, you know every girl in my parish. Which of them do you think deserves this dowry best?"

The miller looked up at the ceiling and appeared to reflect, while the priest watched him with a sly smile.

"Not Genoveva da Silva, at any rate," he said at last. "Like mother, like daughter, and of all the idle, gossiping . . ."

"I was not thinking of her," replied the priest. "Talk of the good girls of the parish."

"Nor Clara the muleteer's daughter either. You would never give it to Catharina Carriça, would you?"

"My good man, she would spend it in six months on laces and hair ribbons. Think of some one else."

After a long silence, the miller spoke, nodding gravely.

"I have an idea, but of course I don't know. I would not venture to advise your Reverence."

" But, man, I came here to ask your advice. Tell me your dea."

" Well, you know my niece Joanna. There is not a better girl n the parish. Of course her father is not very poor, but his farm as not done very well this year, and he still owes me forty dollars which he borrowed for stock. Joanna is an angel, and the dowry would come in very nicely . . ."

The priest cut short his admiration for his relative by a peal of hearty laughter. " Oh, oh, my friend! What a good idea ndeed! My dowry is to pay your forty dollars! That is really excellent. I am so glad I came to ask your advice! " And then becoming suddenly serious, he went on: " Bartholomeu, your avarice will land you in a place in the next world, out of which ll your money will not get you. You are trying to get the better of your parish priest when he comes to ask your honest advice. s that right, Bartholomeu? Is it fair, do you think? "

" But, your Reverence . . ."

" Well says the proverb: ' I went to my neighbour's house and was saddened; I returned to my own and I was consoled.' The best thing will be to keep to my first idea."

" Oh, well, if your Reverence has already made up your mind? "

" All right," returned the priest; " I just wanted to see if you nd I would be of the same mind, but your avarice has blinded ou to all sense of justice. Well, we have not settled anything fter all."

And the priest rose as if to take his leave.

" Your Reverence will excuse me. Just tell me who you think ught to have the dowry."

" The girl I intend to give it to is Bernardina, the laundress's laughter."

" What! Perpetua Rosa's daughter? Your Reverence is joking. f all the worthless hussies in the village! And if the mother ets her claws on the money she will make short work of it! "

" Stop, stop, man. That is not what people in the village say, nd the women's tongues there are no better than anywhere else. he mother and daughter are very poor, but see how neat and espectable they keep themselves. I hear they owe money to gostinho at the shop, but if they could pay him they would. ell, they will be able to pay him now, and have plenty left, for is only a trifle they owe him. I will go and tell them about it t once. Bernardina ought to make a good match now."

Whilst the priest was talking, a brilliant idea seized the miller's nagination. After all, if he could not get the money for his niece, e might get some of it anyhow for himself. Perhaps his three old acks were not lost; he might get three new ones for them now. nd he might take over Perpetua Rosa's debt from Agostinho and

charge good interest on it. Anyhow, it would be odd if he did not reap some advantage from the dowry.

"Well, your Reverence," he said eagerly. "It is quite true that we must not believe all we hear, and I suppose you know best what to do with the dowry. I am obliged to you for asking my advice, and I hope Bernardina will make good use of the money."

"Then that is settled," returned the priest. "Now we have to settle something else; to find a good husband for the girl. You know all the young fellows about here, and you may be able to advise me about that too. Think it over. Perhaps we may be able to agree better this time. Now that I think of it, you had better let me leave the money in your care. I am not much good for taking care of money. You have kept your own so well that I know this will be safe with you. You will not be troubled with the charge long, for with this money we shall soon have Bernardina married."

The old priest displayed the hundred gold pieces before the miller's avaricious eyes, which danced in his head as he saw the glitter of the gold. His pastor noted this and smiled to think that he was making use of a wile of the devil to do a work of God.

Taking leave of the miller, who still stood staring at the gold, the priest went out. The miller came running after him.

"If your Reverence has not breakfasted, you might stop and have some with me. I have only humble fare, but still . . ."

"Thanks, my friend, but I have breakfasted, and I must go to see Bernardina." And shaking his stick at the miller's back as he returned to feast his eyes on the gold, the priest muttered:

"A morsel eaten at that old miser's table would choke me."

As he turned the corner of the road he came full on Manuel da Ventosa, gun on shoulder, and dog at heel, off for a morning's shooting.

"You good-for-nothing young scamp, why don't you go in and help your poor old father, who has to work so hard and is so poor?" exclaimed the priest with a grin which belied his stern words. "Leave the rabbits alone for a bit and come along with me. I want to talk to you."

And as the young man obeyed, he went on:

"You must go to your father first thing to-morrow morning and ask his leave to marry your sweetheart Bernardina."

"Oh, your Reverence! He would never give me leave. He has forbidden me to speak to her, and as you know I am quite dependent on him, I must obey him."

"Then you do not want to marry Bernardina?"

"I want nothing better, sir, but what am I to do?"

"Do as I tell you, Manuel. Leave the rest to me. It is your

duty to marry the girl you love, who will make you a good wife. Don't speak to your father till to-morrow, though, and then come and tell me what he says. Now go after your rabbits and don't tell him you met me."

The young fellow stooped and kissed the old priest's hand. He was trembling with joy and could not express his thanks otherwise. And as the old man hurried away, the tears stood in his eyes and he too was unable to say anything.

All that day Jeronyma was more convinced every moment that something had disordered her master's brain. He kept singing joyful psalms, the " Te Deum " and the " Tantum Ergo," and he played for fully half an hour with the presbytery cat. He fully enjoyed his simple dinner, however, and went out to read his breviary afterwards, not forgetting to say the Angelus when the bell rang. But when he took off his shoes for the evening, Jeronyma, coming in with his slippers, was horrified to see him skipping about in his stocking feet, throwing his shoes into the air and catching them like a schoolboy.

Why was the good priest so joyful? Simply because he had secured the happiness of two of his young parishioners at the cost of his own savings for forty years, and of a small legacy left to him by an old college friend. He had intended to leave this money for the further adornment of his beloved church, and it was the sight of Bernardina's grief which caused the other idea to dawn on him. Small wonder that he had forgotten the Angelus and come in late to supper. A project of forty years is not so lightly dismissed.

He knew his parishioners well, and his plan with the miller was founded on this knowledge. All day the hundred pieces of gold lying in his money chest occupied the miser's imagination and at night they kept him awake, a vision at once celestial and infernal. He began to calculate what could be done with this money, added to his own, scraped together for so many years. He could buy the farm belonging to Ignacio Codeço and put his son Manuel in to work it and get more money, and so buy other farms. But first of all, he would go to Agostinho and offer to take over Perpetua Rosa's debt for a smaller sum. He would persuade the shopkeeper that it was lost money, and that he was only taking it over out of charity. But he must make haste, before Agostinho heard of the dowry. He would go first thing in the morning. Then he would try to persuade his brother, Joanna's father, to let him have the farm for the forty dollars he owed him and a little more. Other ideas occurred to him and still others, until it seemed as if there were hardly anything he could not do with the aid of those hundred gold pieces. To a miser, five hundred dollars is a lot of money. And the money was there, in his own box, in his power. What should he do to make it all his?

Should he deny having received it from the parish priest? After all, there had been no witnesses present. But no! He was avaricious, and he loved money and money's worth, but he had always been honest, in his own way, which is the way of many men. He had pinched and ground and lent money at interest, but he had never robbed any one. At last, after revolving many plans, he fell into the snare which the good priest had set for him.

There was only one way to get all the money honestly into his power. Bernardina was a pretty girl and well brought up, and he knew his son was fond of her. Why should he not marry her, and then his father would have her dowry? That was certain, for Manuel was afraid of him and married or single would remain under his thumb. There was only one thing to be settled now, and that was which would be the best farm for him to buy. His brother's could be had cheap, but that belonging to Ignacio Codeço would bring in more money. And while the good old priest slept happily because he had left himself penniless, the miller tossed about in wakefulness because of his unexpected wealth.

The result of the conversation which father and son had at breakfast was that both went off in search of the parish priest, whom they found issuing from the church after saying his early Mass. Manuel had not told his father of his meeting with the priest the day before, and the miller feared a snub for proposing his son as a husband for Bernardina, similar to the one he had received for suggesting his niece as the best recipient of the dowry.

The good priest, however, was only too delighted at the success of his scheme, and he readily accompanied the miller and his son to Perpetua Rosa's cottage. He had not gone there the day before, preferring to await the maturing of his plan.

The wedding was fixed for Easter, and the priest had the satisfaction of preaching a sermon after he had pronounced the blessing on the union which had cost him the renunciation of the dream of his life. After exhorting the bridegroom to practise the virtues of industry, sobriety, and honesty, and recommending the bride to be affectionate, modest, and obedient to her husband, adding in the homely phrase common to our land that the husband must provide the dinner and the wife must make it fit to eat, the old priest let himself go and preached a thumping denunciation of the sin of avarice; surely a strange theme for a nuptial sermon, but one which seemed very acceptable to all but one member of the congregation present. For all knew how Bernardina's dowry had changed the miller's view of her as a daughter-in-law, but only the village priest was fully aware of the miracle which had wrought the change.

JOÃO REBELLO DA SILVA

1822–1871

THE LAST BULL-FIGHT IN SALVATERRA

I

The King José, the first of the name, was spending his holidays in Salvaterra. The truth is that evil tongues said in strict confidence that in Lisbon His Majesty was always at the lathe, and the Marquis de Pombal was always on the throne. This saying was founded on the fact that the King was an excellent amateur turner, and the Marquis was an excellent amateur ruler.

The season was the middle of spring. The meadows were sweet with flowers, the woods were in full verdure, the corn and fruit farms were full of promise, and the fresh breeze ruffled the curls of the country girls and stole kisses in passing from the perfumed roses. Everywhere one heard singing and saw signs of happiness, joy and love under the bright beams of the glorious sun.

A Royal bull-fight called the Court to Salvaterra. The nobles of the Court were able to breathe more freely on such occasions. The presence of the Minister who aped the King was less obtrusive on such days of amusement. The bulls were fierce, the bull-fighters accomplished, the bull-ring gorgeous, and the ladies present were, of course, adorable. Every one was ready to be amused, and not the less so because the Marquis de Pombal had to stay in Lisbon, where he was engaged in a difficulty of State with the Spanish Ambassador.

In the by-ways of the Palace whispers were heard of the discussions which had taken place between the Spanish Envoy and the Portuguese Secretary of State, and some of these whispers were full of praises of the Minister, uttered aloud so that the very walls might repeat them; whilst others were full of blame, muttered to satisfy private rancour. Pious people and the nobles were on the side of the Spaniard, and they prayed to God that the war which seemed imminent might precipitate the fall of the new nobility. The magistrates and professional classes took the side of the Marquis de Pombal and sneered openly at the enthusiasm of

the adherents of the cause of religion and the old order of things. The Marquis de Pombal had firmly refused the requests made by the Spanish Government.

"Very well," said the ambassador; "an army of sixty thousand men will march into Portugal and will . . ."

"Will do what?" asked the Marquis, flourishing his eyeglass and speaking in an indifferent tone.

"Will enforce the will of the King, my master, and will cause your Excellency and your Sovereign to do what is right and just," replied the ambassador.

The Marquis frowned, and putting his eyeglass in its place, looked severely through it at his visitor. Then he said, coldly:

"Sixty thousand men seem a good many guests for a small country like ours, but with the help of God, the King, my sovereign Lord and Master, will find means to accommodate them. Other soldiers of the King of Spain have been safely lodged in Portuguese prisons before now, and your Excellency is at liberty to inform your Royal Master of that fact."

And rising to dismiss the ambassador, he added:

"Your Excellency knows well that every one is free to do as he likes in his own house, but when he is dead, four men can come and carry him away."

The ambassador went away, swearing by God and the Blessed Virgin that he would see the matter through, and the Marquis prepared for war. There was no doubt that, whatever might be his faults, the Marquis de Pombal was a great Minister and did a very important service to his country. In these latter days there are not so very many Ministers of State to be found who deal so promptly with the threats of foreign ambassadors.

II

The Portuguese nation, so powerful after the great discoveries made under the auspices of Henry the Navigator, with their resultant addition of vast and rich colonies to the tiny mother country, so much admired and respected in subsequent days for enterprise and enlightenment, fell on evil times as the consequence of the marriage of the reigning sovereign with a Spanish princess, and the subsequent introduction into Portugal of religious intolerance and the persecution of the more enlightened minds. Up to that time, the rulers of the country had been too much occupied with their profitable and interesting task of national extension to trouble about the religious convictions of their subjects. But the introduction of the Inquisition by Isabella of Castile and Aragon, the decay of heroism under the sinister influence of narrowness and greed, and the discouragement of independence of thought, brought about the first clouds in the fair sky of Lusitania, which were

destined to gather into tempests and to overwhelm all the brightness of the early days.

The Minister of State, though deemed to be too anxious to take on his shoulders the mantle of Royal government, was, as even his enemies admitted, an honest man. He dreaded the idea of what would inevitably come to pass if his Royal master spent all his time in amusements, and to save trouble, yielded to the arrogant demands of Spain. He could not endure the thought of his country, after all her splendour, becoming merely a Spanish province, of her ancient nobility being forced to bow the knee before the proud and astute Castilian, and he hoped to be able to rouse both the nobles and the middle classes to a sense of their duty to their country and of the danger which threatened it.

Nations have their seasons like the earth, their periods of fertility and of sterility. And the Minister recognised with unerring vision that when a nation disregards the menace daily held up before it by a powerful neighbour, when its people avoid work and prefer idleness with its attendant evils, when its nobles vie with one another in luxury and display, and above all, when its monarch shirks the duty of attending to affairs of State, then the hour of peril is at hand; the time has come for the ambitious neighbour to rally his forces and swoop down upon his prey.

The Marquis favoured industry and endeavoured to study the welfare of the middle classes. Any progress made by the country was really due to his efforts. If manufacturing industry never reached any high level, it was not his fault but that of the idle Ministers who succeeded him in the Government. Some blame must also be laid on the people themselves, who did not like to work more than they could help.

Thus the Minister cared little for the Royal bull-fights. He preferred to see the working classes at the plough instead of on the seats of the bull-ring, and as for the bull-fighters themselves, who might be of noble family, he said that they would be better employed in serving the State with pen or sword, while those of the middle classes ought to be working honestly, earning a respectable livelihood and so contributing to maintain the general welfare of the nation. Such were the Minister's principles.

But although King José willingly left the affairs of State to his Minister, he would not yield an inch in the matter of bull-fights. In this respect he was a true Braganza. The nobles knew this and they derived two kinds of satisfaction from it: the pleasure of their national sport and the knowledge that they were annoying the Minister. To be able to annoy him without risk to themselves, and under the pretext that they were doing the will of their Sovereign, was a double source of delight to them, and they rejoiced in it openly.

The Royal regulations with respect to these public shows enjoined the utmost splendour. This was another cause of rejoicing. Their national love of display could be gratified to the utmost, and the courtiers and their families, especially, of course, the ladies, tried to outrival one another in fine clothes, costly furs, and jewellery, and magnificent headgear brought from France and ornamented with diamonds and pearls of great value. The lovely wives and daughters of the great nobles sat in their boxes hung with the finest curtains of Eastern silks, and smiled approval at the feats of valour and dexterity of the combatants in the arena.

III

The great bull-fight opened like a scene from the Arabian Nights. The curtains of the Royal box were drawn back; the band began the strains of the Royal March, and the King entered the box, accompanied by his suite, all blazing with orders and in jewelled robes. He stood bowing to the vast crowd, and as he took his seat the massy doors of the arena were flung apart and the horsemen rode proudly in. They were all members of the noblest families in the kingdom, and they made a gallant show with their rich costumes, plumed hats, and sword-hilts sparkling with jewels. Each held his lance aloft in his right hand, while his left controlled his splendid Arab horse. One of them, the leader of the cavalcade, advanced beneath the Royal box and swept off his hat in salutation.

This was the Count dos Arcos. His costume was of black velvet, cut to fit his slender figure tightly. The collar and deep cuffs were of the finest lace, made by the patient fingers of Spanish nuns; the doublet opened over a vest of snow-white cambric.

The Count was not above middle height, but he was slight and well proportioned, and all his movements were graceful. He was pale, but his face was full of expression, his large dark eyes being so very bright and speaking that they made him irresistible in anything he demanded. The son of the Marquis de Marialva, and a favourite of his father, who trained him in horsemanship and was himself the best rider in Portugal—perhaps in Europe—when he was on horseback the nobility and distinction of his bearing attracted the attention of every one. He and his mount, as if forming one unit, appeared to realise the idea of the Centaur of classic myth.

The elegance of his advance through the arena, directing his magnificent horse without effort, called forth long and repeated applause, especially when he turned and careered round the ring. During the third round, making his horse to sink to its knees, he drew up in front of a box in which a lady was seated. All eyes

were fixed on her, as she put the silken curtains aside and, blushing at the acclamation of the crowd, acknowledged the homage of the noble cavalier.

The glance which she cast revealed the secret of her soul as a flash of lightning makes everything clear for a moment in the darkest night.

When the young man had again reached the space in front of the King, the latter smiled, and said to his companions:

"Why does the Count come to a gay festival dressed almost in mourning?"

Then he gave the signal for the bull-fight to begin.

The bulls were of pure breed, fierce and full of fight. The danger to the men was great, and the sight roused all the enthusiasm of the spectators.

Several bulls had been disposed of after a brisk fight, and now the gate of the arena opened once more and a black bull rushed in at full charge. He was a magnificent creature, with all the points of purest breed. His legs, graceful as those of a deer, were made for great swiftness, and his strong shoulders and long horns marked him as an adversary to be reckoned with. When he reached the very middle of the arena he stopped short, lowered his fine head, pawed impatiently at the sand, and uttered a ferocious bellow. All the spectators were captivated by the sight of such a fine animal, and a dead silence prevailed. Then the bull charged the horsemen and soon three of the finest horses lay dead on the sand.

IV

There was a brief pause. None of the horsemen advanced against the wild beast, for such it certainly was. The bull roared, lashed his tail, and trampled the sand, as if to challenge the oncoming of an enemy. The Count dos Arcos took up the challenge and rode forward, driving the point of his flexible spear into the muscular neck of the animal. A terrible bellow was answered by the cheers of the multitude and the music of the trumpets, and the Count dos Arcos, withdrawing his spear, galloped round the arena. As he passed beneath the box in front of which he had caused his horse to kneel, a small white hand appeared between the curtains and dropped a rose. Without slackening his speed for an instant, the noble youth bent from his saddle, picked up the rose from the sand, kissed it with an upward glance, and placed it in the opening of his vest. Then facing the bull he remained motionless with his spear fixed for a moment, and anon began to describe circles round the furious animal, gradually narrowing in his course until he could almost lay his hand on its head.

The Count raised his eyes to the box in which sat the fair lady of his devotion, touched the rose in his bosom and charged the bull, driving his lance in between its shoulders. The animal responded by a frantic onslaught, causing the horse to rear upright and piercing its body again and again with his strong horns. The horse fell, carrying its rider with it, and before he could disengage himself the bull was upon him.

All happened so quickly that the last echoes of the applause of the spectators had not yet died away when they were changed into cries of horror and anxiety. The red-cloaked attendants of the Count, all nobles of the Court, vainly endeavoured to distract the bull's fury by waving their cloaks before his eyes. He saw nothing, stopped for nothing; all his rage was concentrated on the prostrate form on the sand. It was only when he was satisfied that his vengeance had been fully wreaked that he seated himself on the trampled sand with the air of a conqueror, resting his forepaws on the Count's lifeless body.

A silence more expressive than any sound of lamentation could have been fell like a mantle over the vast arena. The King, the nobles, the ladies, and all the others present leaned forward breathlessly to assure themselves of the terrible thing which had happened, and then raised their eyes with a common impulse to the open sky above them as if to follow the flight of the soul which had just left the mangled bleeding body on the sand.

The silence was broken by a shriek of such anguish of mind that all present shuddered and started. The lady who had thrown the rose to the Count fell back into the arms of the other ladies who had rushed forward to her assistance. She continued to scream as if her agonised heart were breaking from her bosom.

The King covered his face with his hands, and sat as if turned to stone, and his grief was sincerely shared by all who had known and admired the gallant Count.

But there was still another act of the awful drama to come. The Marquis de Marialva, father of the dead youth, had followed his magnificent prowess with pride and happiness, leaning from his box and smiling at the applause of the crowd. Now he rose with a terrible cry:

"My son! my son! My only son, the heir of my house, the consolation of my old age!"

He clapped his hand to his side, as if to seek for his sword, and then remembered that he himself had armed his son with that trusty sword when he embraced him before his entrance into the arena. The old man stood for a moment as if unable to realise what he was about to do, and began to descend the steps leading from his box to the outside of the sanded ring.

"His Majesty commands that the Marquis de Marialva await his

orders," said one of the Royal chamberlains, laying his hand on the old noble's arm.

The Marquis shook off the detaining hand, looked the chamberlain full in the face with a glance of terrible anguish, and continued to descend the steps without a word.

The chamberlain followed him.

"His Majesty's orders are that misfortune enough has occurred already, and he does not wish to lose two of his most valued nobles. Will the Marquis disobey the commands of the King?"

"The King's commands are issued to the living, and I am already dead," replied the old man. "See that. What is it? Just now it was my only son." He pointed to the corpse lying beneath the black hoofs of the victorious bull. "His Majesty can do all things except this one. He cannot dishonour the grey head of the old man who has served him loyally and well for so many years. Tell him this and let me pass."

The King half rose, and uttered an exclamation of horror as the Marquis continued to descend to the arena. Well did he know that never in his life had the Marquis spoken anything but the truth, never had he broken a promise. He stood quite still watching his old vassal breathlessly, awaiting with the silence of despair the issue of the moment.

V

The Marquis entered the arena, steadfast and determined as an ancient Roman in the face of certain death. As he approached the body of his son, his features were convulsed with anguish, and tears broke from his eyes. But he dashed them away and stooped to pick up the sword which had become loosened from the torn belt to which it had been attached.

With one of the impulses which sway crowds, the whole assembly of spectators rose to their feet. Their horrified expression and the tears which flowed from many eyes spoke of their anxiety and tension of feeling.

What was going to happen to the unhappy old noble? How could he be saved from apparently certain death?

The bereaved father knelt beside his dead son and pressed a kiss on his forehead. Then rising, sword in hand and cape on arm, he faced the bull, now roused to new fury by the appearance of another enemy.

The silence was profound, and all, even the King, remained standing, watching the strange drama.

The bull charged, but the Marquis parried the charge with sword and cape. The panting animal charged again and again, his red nostrils breathing steam beneath the glossy black of his muzzle.

Still the old man frustrated every onslaught, calculating his distances, and seeking to fatigue the bull with every renewed effort.

The spectators gradually became accustomed to the scene, and began to breathe more freely, though they still remained with their gaze fixed immovably on the two combatants, both animated by the desire for victory, the knowledge that their struggle was a fight for life.

Suddenly the King uttered a sharp cry. The bull charged again, and this time his horns were directly on a level with the breast of the Marquis. All present fell on their knees and began to pray aloud for the soul of the last Marquis de Marialva.

But now something amazing happened. With an agility not to be expected from a man of his years, the old noble leaped on the bull's broad head, and with an unerring hand drove his sword into the animal's neck, fair between the shoulders. The splendid beast sank on his knees, gave one last despairing look at his victorious enemy who stood now before him, and rolled over lifeless.

Tumultuous applause and cries of thankfulness burst forth from all in the great circle. But the Marquis, pale as a ghost, and trembling from head to foot, did not seem to hear the thunders of jubilation; to see anything but one—the body of his son, on which he threw himself in an uncontrollable transport of grief.

VI

A new sensation came into this memorable spectacle now. The door of the Royal box was flung open, and the Marquis de Pombal, pale, agitated and covered with the dust of travel, entered and made obeisance to the King.

"We are at war with Spain, your Majesty. There was no way of preventing it. It is a terrible thing that your Majesty should permit these savage spectacles to waste your time and kill your nobles when the safety of the kingdom is at stake. Continue in this way, your Majesty, and there will soon be no such country as Portugal!"

Stunned for an instant by the news, the King, without comment, said slowly and almost humbly:

"This, your Excellency, is the last bull-fight that will ever take place in Portugal during my reign."

"I hope I may rely on your Majesty's wisdom that such will be the case. There are not so many men in your Majesty's kingdom that you can throw the lives of the best of them away in exchange for that of a bull."

After a moment's pause, during which the King remained silent, the Minister added:

"Will your Majesty permit me to go down and offer my sympathy to the Marquis de Marialva?"

"Go. He is a father. You know what to say to him?"

"The same as he would say to me if my son lay where the Count of Arcos is lying now."

The King left the box, never to return to it, and the Minister, descending the steps with all the dignity conferred by his lofty stature, raised the old nobleman in his arms and respectfully kissing his hand, said:

"My lord, a nobleman of Portugal like you is better able to give great example than to be moved by the example of others. You had a son, and God has taken him from you. Now, listen to me. Spain has declared war on us; the King, my Sovereign Master, has need of the sword of the wisest and bravest of his trusted servitors."

And taking the Marquis by the arm, he led him from the arena.

Dom José I. kept his word, and during his reign there never was another bull-fight in Salvaterra.

BRITO ARANHA

1833–1914

GOOD EXAMPLE

In a modest house in the suburbs of Alfama, near Lisbon, there lived a young married couple, known to their friends as José Maria and Anna Rosa.

Anna was about twenty years of age, not exactly beautiful, but pleasing of features and expression. At twenty years of age great beauty is not necessary to interest and attract. Her intellectual faculties were not so very striking either, nor was her education on a higher level than that of most girls of her station, but she was gentle, modest, and sensible, with a calm dignity which caused her to be respected in her little circle. People who knew her intimately called her affectionately " José's Anninha."

The husband was a little older, being about twenty-two years of age. He, too, was a good-looking and sweet-natured individual, and he did not lack friends who both liked and respected him. In the locksmith's factory, where he worked, he was esteemed by all, from the manager down to the smallest apprentice; he was punctual, obliging, and a skilled worker, and he earned enough to keep the modest home in comfort.

The factory was a small one, doing a good business with regular customers. The proprietors were several gentlemen forming a syndicate, and they were almost unknown to the workmen. They seldom came to the works, and when they did come, they shut themselves up in the office with the manager, examined the books, and received the manager's report as to the progress of the business. They never interfered with his activities or with his management of the workmen, recognising that this was not their province, and that they would only cause trouble and friction by their interference. They were quite satisfied to know that things went on smoothly and that the profits of the syndicate were increasing steadily.

José Maria was foreman in this workshop, and he had the full confidence not only of the manager but of the workmen. He was cheerful and friendly with all of them, but now and then, when

hey talked politics, as workmen in every country have a habit of loing, he would laugh and say:

"We cannot interfere with the government of the country; we hould not know how to do it. But we can do our own work which ve have learned, and so be sure of being able to get our living onestly and with a good conscience. If we can give a good account of what is entrusted to us, we need not care who rules the tate."

"You are right, José," observed a workman. "Let each of us think of his work here and of his home when he leaves here. For my part, when I go home after a good day's work and find myself with my children round the supper-table, I am just in a little Paradise, which I would not exchange for all the Governments on earth."

When José Maria's baby was born there was great rejoicing in the little home.

As the workman's pay, though enough for modest comfort, did not permit of much margin for luxuries, Anninha, as a proud mother, resolved to add to the capital of the small family by her own work, and thus obtain little extras for the use of the child, and put by a trifle for the future. She had good taste and was skilful with her needle, and she soon obtained orders from the wives of some of the shopkeepers in the neighbourhood for clothes to make and mend. In time she saved enough to buy a sewing-machine, and then the work was done more easily and quickly.

A second and third child came in time to cheer the home of the honest foreman, and peace and happiness continued to bless the happy household.

II

Things were not quite the same in the home of the manager of the little factory. It was not that his wife was intentionally lacking in her duty, but she was of a restless, irritable, and discontented temperament, always looking at the dark side of things for preference. She really loved her husband, but did not know how to make him happy.

Antonio Diniz and his wife had only one child, a little girl, just old enough to perceive the want of harmony which reigned in her home without being able to do anything to remedy it. The mother grew into the habit of indulging her nervous agitation to such an extent that she flew into a violent passion on the slightest provocation, and her husband began to dread to return home after his day's work.

The manager became so much worried and distressed by the unhappy state of things at home that he, too, began to grow peevish and irritable. The workmen under his charge recognised that something was wrong, but they knew that it was no affair of theirs.

They could not comfort him in any way, and they did not dare to concern themselves with his private life.

One evening when Antonio returned from work he found his wife in a state of uncontrollable fury. Something of a trifling nature had annoyed her, and she had worked herself up into such a rage that she had lost all control over herself. The little girl had run into her bedroom in terror, and when the husband asked what was the matter, his wife hurled a torrent of abuse and recriminations at his head. She was laying the table for supper, and in her agitation the vessels fell from her hand and rattled on the floor.

Seeing that she was really beyond herself with rage, the husband decided to keep silence, in the hope that her excitement might die out for lack of encouragement. But she was not disposed to calm herself; in fact, her husband's coolness only seemed to enrage her more. Suddenly she snatched up a sharp knife, which she had placed beside the cheese dish, and hurled it in Antonio's face.

The unhappy husband, with the knife quivering in his cheek, and the blood pouring down on his clothes, endeavoured to overpower the furious woman, and a violent struggle took place. But the shock of the wound and the loss of blood weakened him so much that he reeled and fell heavily to the floor in a fainting condition.

The noise of the fall and the shrieks of the woman brought some of the neighbours to the scene. The wounded man was taken to the hospital, and the half-mad woman was carried off in charge of the police, no one being able to ascertain exactly what had taken place.

III

The bad news of Antonio Diniz's domestic unhappiness soon circulated through the neighbourhood and among the workmen who were under his care. When gossip had run its course, and the evil tongues which abound in every class of society had wagged to their full capacity, the matter came to be more calmly discussed, and all the blame was given to the woman. Antonio had always been known to be a quiet and decent fellow, regular in his hours and not given to quarrelling with any one, whilst his wife's lack of education and of self-control were well known to all who had anything to do with her. The men at the factory could all relate how quiet and sensible the manager had been until lately, and how they had guessed that the change in him was due to some great domestic trouble, which was no business of theirs.

José Maria, as foreman, had to take the manager's place now, and the esteem in which he had always been held was increased by the quiet dignity with which he discharged his new duties, without in the least altering the friendly relations which he had always had with his fellow-workers.

As to the neighbours' gossip, he advised his wife not to join in it or encourage it, and if she were asked any questions about the unhappy manager to reply that her husband never spoke at home of anything which happened at the factory. His work was one part of his life, and his home quite another.

Antonio was still in a very dangerous condition, and his wife had been placed in a convent attached to the prison in the hope that her violence, which was still unabated, might yield to steady treatment by the nuns. A couple of weeks passed in this way.

One morning, José Maria rose earlier than usual, saying that he had to see to a particularly important piece of work, and might be late in returning to dinner, as there was to be a meeting of the syndicate that afternoon, and everything must be in readiness for it. Anninha gave him his breakfast, telling him how she had obtained some new customers for her needlework, and was going to save some money so that the children might go to a good school. The pair laughed and chatted like a couple of sweethearts, and José Maria left for the factory after tenderly kissing his wife and the children. Anninha leaned from the window to watch him and to wave a farewell to him before he turned the corner of the street.

The children went off to school, and the happy wife sat down to her sewing-machine, singing as she worked. How happy she was; what a good husband she had, and what nice children! She was happier now even than when she had married first, for now she had four people to love her instead of one, and by her own efforts she was able to maintain order and comfort in the little home. And she worked and sang until it was time to go and prepare the dinner.

The children came back for the mid-day meal, but their father did not appear. It was the first time such a thing had ever happened, but Anninha told them that no doubt he had been kept at the works to prepare for the meeting of the syndicate, now that he had to act as manager. When they went off to the afternoon school, she went out to buy something specially good for supper, as her man would be sure to come home worn out and hungry after his busy day.

It was not yet six o'clock, and Anninha still worked and sang, whilst the savoury soup bubbled in the large saucepan by the fireside. She had taken special pains with that soup, knowing that it was a favourite dish of José's. A nice fresh fish and a carefully-made salad were to follow it. Her man was worth a little attention from the wife he made so happy. Suddenly there was a knock at the outer door. Anninha ran out in delight at the thought that José Maria had come home so soon. She threw the door open, and saw six of the men from the factory. They stood with uncovered heads, and at their feet lay something shrouded in a dark cloth.

Who can picture the anguish, the incredulity of the poor wife? Impossible to take in the full meaning of what the sympathetic

workmen had to tell her. José Maria had worked incessantly all day, refusing the offers of the men to bring him a meal, saying laughingly that the supper his wife would have ready on his return would be worth waiting for. At the close of the meeting of the syndicate, as José Maria was being complimented by the gentlemen on his capable discharge of the duties so unexpectedly thrust upon him, he staggered, threw up his hands, and fell dead, struck by a sudden syncope.

IV

Now a period of struggle began for the poor widow. Her grief at the loss of her faithful and loving partner was increased by the knowledge that poverty stood at the door of the sad little home, and that three helpless young creatures were dependent for life itself on the work of her unaided hands. The Portuguese people have always been noted for their large-hearted charity and kindness to neighbours in trouble, and many of Anninha's acquaintances, wives of workmen like herself, found means to help her to the best of their ability. Clothes for the children, little articles of household use for herself, home-made preserves, bread, potted meat; all these found their way to her, and were pressed on her as a favour to the donors. But she was not the only poor widow in her circle, and although charity knows no limits, the means of bestowing it is often very limited indeed.

Anninha was too honest and high principled not to cast about for every possible chance of earning a livelihood for herself and her family, which had now diminished in number, for the elder boy had been admitted, through the influence of one of the gentlemen forming the syndicate, to the Free School, from which so many men of humble origin have issued on their way to a distinguished career.

One day as she had just returned from a search for work she found a letter from the manager of the factory where José Maria had been employed. He told her that he was better and had left the hospital, and he asked her to call and see him at the factory.

Anninha did not delay responding to the invitation. Next morning she presented herself at the factory, and was received with warm sympathy by her poor husband's chief and friend. He told her that his wife had been found to be insane, and had been sent to an asylum. His little girl was learning to keep house for him, and he was just beginning to know the peace to which, after leaving his work, he had long been a stranger. After making some inquiries into the circumstances in which Anninha found herself, Antonio informed her that out of respect for her late husband the workmen had wished to subscribe for a testimonial to him, and he himself had been authorised to put down a sum on behalf of the members of the syndicate as well as on his own behalf. He thought the best

testimonial would be to help the widow, so the sum when complete would be handed to her.

Anninha thanked him with tears, and took leave of him. A few days later she received a visit from a workman, who brought her the sum subscribed and at the same time told her that the manager's wife had just died in the asylum in a fit of raving mania.

V

A year had passed in this way, the widow working hard and bringing up her children with the greatest devotion. Her father, a carpenter who had been a widower for many years, had come to live in her little flat, and by his work, in which he was still skilled, he helped to eke out the sums obtained by his daughter's industry.

Antonio Diniz continued his task as manager of the factory, which prospered as before. One of the best workmen had been appointed foreman in succession to José Maria, and it seemed that the whole of the past relations of the two head workmen had been covered by the waves of time.

One day, at a meeting of the syndicate, mention was made by one of the gentlemen of the tragedy which had happened in that room just a year before, when the honest foreman fell dead at their feet.

"By the way, Antonio," he asked, "what has become of the widow? Has she married again?"

"Oh no, sir," replied the manager. "She will never marry again. She is a good quiet creature, thinking only of her children, and working hard to bring them up honestly. She is a good example to every workman's wife. But then poor José was a good example to every workman."

The gentlemen of the syndicate made some other inquiries, and then said they wished to send the good woman some money, so a subscription was made up. Antonio undertook to see that the sum was sent to Anninha with the compliments of his masters, and he locked it away in the safe until one of the men could take it to her next day. But as he walked home that evening his mind dwelt in a curious way on the question asked by the gentleman. "Had she married again?" Why should she not marry again?

When Antonio took the money out of the safe, and was about to call one of the men to send him with it and a friendly message to Anninha, a sudden idea flashed across his mind, and made him put the money back in the safe again. He had not seen the widow for a long time. How did he know she had no thought of marrying again? He would go himself that evening to where she lived, and see her in her own home, where he had never yet been. The money to be sent to her would give him a good excuse for calling on her. He would not announce his visit, but would just go and chance finding her as she was. He remembered his own unhappy married life,

and thought of how often he had envied the humble joy of his foreman's little home, to which he had always been so glad to return when his day's work was over. Yes, he would go and see the excellent woman who had made his poor comrade so happy; he would have the satisfaction of cheering her by the gift he had to bring, and he would tell her how well the gentlemen had spoken of poor José Maria, and how much he was still missed in the factory.

VI

Antonio felt a strange perturbation when he arrived at the house where Anninha lived with her father and her children. Would she be glad to see him or not? Would she think his visit an intrusion, bringing her painful reminders of past sorrow?

Anninha opened the door, and on seeing her visitor she coloured lightly as she asked him to enter. Could she be of service to him; had he come about some needlework, perhaps?

The manager found himself strangely embarrassed. He hardly liked to explain that he had come to offer her money; he did not care to say that he had come because he wished to see her. As a way out of the difficulty, he said that he was the bearer of a little present to her children from the gentlemen of the factory.

Anninha politely offered him a seat and introduced him to her father, who had just come in from work. The presence of the elder man put the others at their ease.

After a few minutes' general conversation, Antonio, with an impulse for which he could not account, said to the father, whose name was Gregorio: "Master Gregorio, will you grant me a word in private, with your daughter's permission?"

"You will take a glass of wine with my father, sir?" said Anninha. "You can talk to him as freely as you like, for I have some work which I ought to deliver, and I will take it now. The children can come with me. Good-evening, sir, if you are not here when I return."

And packing up her work, she called the children, and departed with a blush and a curtsey.

Antonio opened his heart to the old man. He told him how unhappy his married life had been; how lonely he was now, not knowing exactly how to bring up his little daughter. He repeated all the praise of Anninha which he had heard from poor José Maria, whose domestic happiness he had so often envied. Could not such happiness be his at last? Was there any chance that Anninha would take him for her husband?

"Have you ever said anything of this to her?" asked the old carpenter.

"This is the first time I have ever been in her house. It is

almost the first time I have seen her since her husband died. Do you think she will have me? "

" You must ask her. Are you in such a hurry, sir? "

" Yes, yes. I cannot wait any longer; I must have some order in my house, some comfort in my life. There is nothing to wait for except Anninha's consent."

" Well, sir, I cannot promise you that, but I can say that if she marries you, it will make me very happy. She has always been a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother, and she deserves a good home."

" You are right, Master Gregorio. She has always been a good example. I can give her a good home, and there will be a comfortable corner in it for her father. My little girl, too, will be happy to have Anninha's children for her playmates."

The men sat smoking and chatting until Anninha and the children returned. She looked rather surprised to see the manager still there, but was too hospitable to express anything but pleasure. Timidly she asked if he would share their simple evening meal.

" Indeed I will, with pleasure, Anninha," replied the manager; " but first of all, your father has something to tell you." And he signed to the old man to speak of what had passed between them.

Anninha blushed and then grew pale as she listened. When her father stopped speaking, she hesitated and faltered: " But, sir, can I believe that you are asking me to marry you? Asking a woman who is plain and poor, and who has the care of a family on her hands, to share your home? Think well, sir. It is not a thing which once done can be undone! Will you not be sorry later? "

" I shall never be sorry, Anninha. Your children will be safe in my house, they will have a father in me, as my child will have a mother in you. And they cannot fail to be happy when they see that we are happy too. I have been very unhappy in the past; will you not take compassion on me now? "

" Do not speak like that, Master Antonio. Should I not be grateful to you for coming here, in the goodness of your heart, to offer a safe home to my children and a kind companion to myself? I will marry you, Antonio, and with the blessing of God I will make you as good a wife as you deserve to have."

" Anninha, I have only one thing more to ask. Let us be married this day week. I have waited too long for calm and happiness. Do not make me wait much longer."

And kneeling hand in hand before the old man, they asked his blessing for themselves and for their children.

RODRIGO PAGANINO

1835–1863

THE GREATER BURDEN

I

THE sun had set a quarter of an hour before. It was time to leave off work and to go home to the evening meal. All the workmen on the estate lived in the neighbouring village, and all bent their steps thither, some singly, some in groups of two or three, chatting as they went.

André Pimenta, one of the most industrious of the workmen, put on his coat, took up his empty basket, and set off alone, paying no heed to the invitations of some of his comrades to go and have a glass of wine with them at the inn, and not even bidding them good-night.

There was a good deal of talk about this when they assembled in the village inn for their usual evening glass of wine and gossip. Never had they known André to remain aloof or be ungracious until now. What had come to him? Perhaps the poor fellow was ill, or some one had hurt his feelings.

He had always been, not merely a good workman, but as merry as a lark both while he worked and on the way home. Now, he had worked all day in silence, not taking any notice of the jokes and songs of his comrades.

When the group of workmen reached the little bridge over the brook, André was sitting there, moodily gazing at the running water.

"Well, André, thinking of drowning yourself?"

"Hallo, André, too tired to go home?"

"André Pimenta, shall we send Magdalena to fetch you home?"

Not a word did he answer, nor did he move from his sullen position on the low wall, gazing at the fast-running brook. The men went on their way, marvelling at the change in their fellow-workman. They knew him to be a good and honest labourer, fairly well educated for his class, and an excellent husband and father, always sitting at his door in summer playing with his children and chatting to any of his neighbours who might happen to pass; and in winter always to be found at his fireside reading aloud and keeping the happy home in tune.

Never was a doctor required in that house, nor even an apothecary, and no visitor who dropped in could ever report the slightest family dissension.

Not that the villagers were too much inclined to speak well of their neighbours. On the contrary, even the parish priest himself was not always free from their criticism. But when it came to André and Magdalena Pimenta, all agreed that they lived as happily as the angels in Heaven.

Magdalena herself could not make out what was the matter with her man when he came in without a word, pushed the children aside as they ran to meet him, and flung himself on a bench by the window.

The good woman did not like to ask any questions, but as she busied herself with the supper she cast many furtive and uneasy glances in the direction of her silent spouse. A basket stood at the end of the bench on which he sat; he pushed it on to the floor, with a muttered oath, and buried his head in his hands.

Magdalena could not hold out any longer. She hurried to him and knelt down beside him, while the frightened children looked on from near the door.

"You are ill, André? Or . . ." and she grew pale. "Has anything gone wrong with the work? You have not lost your place?"

"What the devil, woman? Lost my place? I just wish I had."

"Well, come to supper, anyhow. You will feel better after the nice stew I have made."

"I don't want any supper. I can't eat anything."

Magdalena waited until the children had finished their supper and gone out to play, and then she cleared away the supper things, and sat down with her knitting on a low stool at André's feet.

"Tell me," she said gently. "The children are not here now, and I want to know what is the matter. Surely you have confidence in me, and perhaps I can help you."

"Have you ever thought," returned André after a short pause, "that there are people in this world, yes and a great many of them too, who do not have to work all day long as I do to get bread for their children?"

"Why, yes, of course. What then? Those are matters which do not concern us."

"Don't they concern us? They concern every one. Here am I, a man as good as any other, who never did any harm to any one, who works from morning till night to find food and shelter for you and the children; and if I were to fall ill to-morrow, I might have to go to the poorhouse infirmary; if I were to die, you and the children might have to beg your bread."

"But we were born poor, and the poor must work or starve."

" You are only a woman, and you cannot understand. I must not blame you, though, for I am a man, and I never understood those things until to-day."

After a while, Magdalena got him to tell what had happened. Two gentlemen from Lisbon had come down to see the owner of the estate, and to bargain with him about the purchase of some timber. They went about among the workmen and watched what was being done. Then they sat down near where André was at work and began to talk about the advantage of being a landed proprietor and having poor wretched creatures slaving to make money for the master to enjoy.

" Poor wretches," said one, " toiling all day like that for so little money."

" Well, as to that," replied the other, " if they did not work, we should have nothing to eat, for it is only by their work that we live. The master of this fine property would be in an odd way if he had not these poor men to work for him, and to make money for him to spend."

" Certainly, I suppose we cannot all be equal. For my part I should be dead in a day if I had to work as they do."

And they went on talking in this strain until the master came to take them over the property and show them his woods.

André seemed to have his eyes opened for the first time in his life. He had never thought of such things before, but now he reflected on what he had heard, as he went on working mechanically. He had always worked contentedly, never reflecting on any rights beyond what he had earned. Now a hundred new thoughts crowded into his brain. He could not say anything to his comrades; he must go home, think, digest as it were, the new mental food he had picked up.

" I tell you, Magdalena, the master, Dom Manoel Fernandes, makes all his money out of our work. What does he do for a living? He owns more than a dozen farms, any one of which would keep us in comfort for the rest of our lives."

" André, man, I am ashamed of you. You are envious of the master. It is a great sin. And in any case, you cannot reform the world. We ought to be thankful to have health and work to do, you on the estate and I in the home."

" Envious? No, Magdalena, I am not envious. But I am a man as well as the master, and he ought not to have all the rights while I have all the trouble; I and the others like me."

" For the love of Heaven, man, talk of what you understand," said a voice behind the couple. It was the master, who had come out to take a walk after his guests had gone, and he called at the cottage door to give Magdalena some sweets for the children. He had stopped in the doorway and heard the man's last words. Mag-

dalena started, and there was a moment of silence. Then André, realising that defence was rather difficult in the circumstances, took the offensive.

" Now, sir, it isn't fair to stop and listen to what a man may have to say to his wife, Dom Manoel! " The master laughed.

" Words are but wind, it is true, but yours were loud enough to be called hurricanes. And if you do not want people to hear what you say, you must put your fingers in their ears or speak softly."

" You are right, sir," said Magdalena, desiring to smooth matters over. " Words are but wind, as you say, and I am sure my poor André never meant any harm."

" And there is no harm done, my good woman. Even the king himself is made of flesh and blood, and we are all but human. But let us say a word on that subject. André here would like to be rich and the owner of a farm or even of many farms, I suppose? "

" Oh, sir, don't pay any attention to what he said. He is a good man and a hard worker, as you know."

" That is true, Magdalena. And for that reason I am going to make him an offer. All my estate can be his if he likes to have it."

" You are pleased to jest, sir," said André, staring at the master, while the children gathered round to listen.

" Just listen to me, André. I have bought another estate in another part of the country, and I want to go there for a couple of months, say three months. As you are a steady man and a good worker, and as you have some education, I will make you my agent to look after the property here while I am away. If you are as quick with your arms as with your tongue, at the end of the three months my estate of Chibanta here will be yours if you care to have it."

" Oh, sir . . ."

" Say no more now, but instead of going to work to-morrow morning, come to my office. Leave the rest to me." And Dom Manoel went off smiling after a good-night to the astonished pair.

Magdalena, woman-like, recovered speech first.

" Why were you such a fool, André? He will dismiss you to-morrow, as sure as fate. Then where shall we be? "

" It's hard if a man can't speak a couple of words in his own house after his hard day's work. But I am sure the master is only joking. Even if he dismisses me, I am a good workman and I can go elsewhere, though it will be hard to leave our little home here."

Next morning André set off for Chibanta, looking like a man going to execution. Dom Manoel stood awaiting him at the door of his office. " Well, André, my man, I hope you will look better to-morrow than you do to-day. One would think you had all the sorrows of the world on your shoulders."

"Sir, I know you are going to dismiss me from your service. You must do as you like, but it is hard that for a few hasty words . . ."

"Nonsense, man. What you said yesterday has been said. We have other things to say to-day. We have very much to say, indeed, for to-day you begin to act as my agent."

And Dom Manoel took André round the estate and introduced him to the amazed workmen as their new head and agent over the whole estate. Then he brought him back to the office and explained everything to him very carefully and thoroughly.

Dom Manoel Fernandes was amused to see the air of grave responsibility and knowledge of business which his former workman assumed almost unconsciously as the day wore on. Soon he began to say confidently: "You may leave everything to me, sir. I shall know how to manage everything. I know all the men, and I shall be able to see to all the work easily. You can make your mind easy while you are away."

"Yes, my man. And now, my agent must have a suitable house to live in, and you had better move in here with your wife and children. If things go on as we expect, it will be your future home in any case. But now listen to me before you go home. Envy is a very ugly thing, and a very foolish thing, but there is something more foolish still; that is, to judge by appearances only. I have the name of being very rich, I have a fine house here, I have a large estate of woodland, farms, and crops, and I employ a great many men in the village, but I give you my word of honour I often do not know where to turn for a little ready cash, and I have more trouble on my mind than the poorest labourer in my employment."

And as André shook his head as though unable to credit this, the master smiled and said: "Wait till I see you again after three months, and then you will tell me what you think."

II

André entered on his new duties with all the zeal of the novice. His wife and children were delighted at the idea of living in a fine house, and all was bustle and excitement over the prospect of moving in.

André took his new responsibilities very seriously. All the diligence which he had formerly employed in his daily toil was now devoted to his task of supervision, which did not end with the day. No going home to rest at six o'clock now. He never had any break during the day, and hardly slept at night. Often, when he had come home late, wearied by the multitude of cares on his shoulders, and had gone to bed after the supper which he was too tired to eat, he would drop into a sound sleep, only to be awakened by the bark-

ing of the watch dogs. Then he would go out to see if anything was wrong; if the keepers and night watchmen were at their posts, and if all was right in the stables. When he came back, sleep was gone, and he would lie thinking over the orders to be given to the men next morning. It would never do for him to forget anything; and it was all so new to him.

The more he tried to master his work, the more odd little unknown details seemed to crop up; small in themselves, but important as parts of the whole. The different kinds of land, the qualities of seeds, the proper moment for sowing, weeding, transplanting, pruning, grafting; the various manures and fertilisers to be selected, the thinning and topping of the timber, the care of all the different kinds of live stock; all these had to be decided by him. In obedience to the master's orders, all the men came to him for instructions, and it would never do for him to hesitate or confess ignorance. His dignity would not permit him to consult the workmen or to discuss matters with them. He was too near them in origin for that. Often when he had given an order he felt that he ought to change it for another one, but he was afraid to do so, thinking that would lessen his authority and make the men despise him. When he was asked about anything and had given his answer, unexpected difficulties would present themselves in the way of executing the directions given, and he did not know how to remove them. And with all this, he could not help overhearing the remarks made by the farm-hands and labourers; how they laughed at him behind his back and ridiculed the orders they were carrying out.

André had always been noted for his cheerful and friendly nature. Now he became gradually morose and distrustful of every one.

Even his home life changed for the worse. Magdalena, as the wife of so important a man, wished to dress fashionably and imitate the manners of the ladies whom she saw when she drove into the market town. The children were always asking for something new: dainty food, new toys, new amusements. They were never satisfied, and when they had got one thing, they at once began to think of what they wanted next. André had not always the money to gratify their wishes, and this led to scenes of tears and recriminations.

"I really think, André, you might spend more on me and on the children!"

"I have not got the money to spare, woman. I have to build new barns."

"Barns, indeed. You think more of your barns and your cattle-sheds than of the comfort of your wife and children!"

"I tell you I am really short of ready money now."

"Don't tell lies. I know that yesterday you sold a lot of corn

to the miller. His wife told me so. What do you do with all the money you get? "

And so on. At the end of two months André felt as if he were going mad. One morning he took a sudden resolution. He rose before dawn after a sleepless night, during the greater part of which Magdalena had wept and reproached him because he had refused to buy her a diamond cross like that worn by the wife of a neighbouring squire.

André went to the stable and saddled one of the riding-horses. Then he left a letter for one of the most intelligent of the men, containing some general orders, mounted and rode to the market town, where he breakfasted and took the train for the nearest town to the estate where Dom Manoel Fernandes lived now. He left his horse at the inn, with instructions to send it back to Chibanta at the first opportunity. At the sight of the master standing superintending the loading of a cart of grain, André rushed forward, hat in hand.

" Take back the estate, sir. Take Chibanta off my shoulders, or I shall put an end to myself. Such a life as I have is quite unbearable! "

The master smiled. " Already, André? "

" Oh, sir, don't ask me to go on for another month. I cannot do it! '

" Well, and your poor wife and children, and the prospect of the hospital if you fall ill? "

" I shall be in another kind of hospital, sir, if you do not release me. I shall be in a lunatic asylum. Did any one ever think it was so difficult to manage an estate? "

Dom Manoel Fernandes took pity on the poor man, and invited him to his office. There over a glass of good wine from his own vineyards he heard the whole unhappy story.

" And as for my wife and children, sir, they are as unhappy as they can be now, because nothing contents them. After all, Magdalena is a sensible woman at heart, and when she has no longer any position to keep up I am sure she will be glad to be a simple labourer's wife once more. And the children are ours and must do as they are told."

So said, so done. The master accompanied his faithful servant back to Chibanta and took over the reins of government once more. When the position was explained to Magdalena, she fell in with the idea of a return to her former life of simple contentment, as her husband had foreseen. The children were rather dissatisfied at first, but the old golden rule of obedience to parents which prevails in our peasant homes soon conquered. The family returned to the cottage in the village, and André took his place in the ranks of the workers again.

But his master took a special interest in his work, and the experience which he found too burdensome on a large scale was of use to him in small ways. He earned better wages and was able to save money. When a small farm fell vacant, the tenancy was offered to him and accepted gladly. Now he was out of the reach of poverty and care.

But when André heard others speak with envy or admiration of the riches of the master or of his friends, he always said with decision:

"I know more about all that than you do. God has given wealth to some and poverty to others; no one seems to be contented with his own lot. The rich man envies his workman's toil; the poor man wishes for riches and power—but of the two I can tell you which is the greater burden."

JULIO CESAR MACHADO

1835–1890

THE FISHERMAN OF LESSA DA PALMEIRA

I

LESSA DA PALMEIRA is a place worth seeing when the sun is setting behind the purple hills, and the fishermen's wives, in their gay skirts and white caps, are spreading the nets to dry as they join in their country part-songs, with melancholy or passionate cadences.

Most people will tell you that the proper time to see Lessa da Palmeira is in the summer, when the fashionable folk of Oporto repair thither for rest and change, and when they are to be seen in their smart costumes, toned down for country wear, but new and smart still, walking on the sands, bathing in the warm sea, and listening to the string bands of wandering musicians, passing from one town to another. I do not think that this is the best time myself.

What I am going to relate took place in the very early summer, before the season had begun, and when the fashionable folk were still dancing in crowded rooms in the city.

At first sight of Lessa it would be difficult to say if it is a rich seaside place or a poor fishing village. In the midst of streets of humble cottages there are side avenues leading to splendid stone villas, overgrown with jasmine and roses. One would say that the smile of wealth was insulting the tears of poverty, if the very contrast did not add to the mystery and poetry of the place.

This is the secret of it all.

Lessa is in a land of fishermen. Each man who earns his living by the sea has his home in the village, to which he repairs to rest from the struggle with wave and wind and to enjoy the calm happiness of his family circle. Some of these men, weary of constant toil or fired by ambition, sign on as sailors on some ship going from Oporto to Brazil, where they seek riches and ease. But before sailing, each one of them goes to kneel in the little chapel dedicated to the Christ of Mattosinhos, and makes the vow that if he attains fortune he will build a fine house to the glory of the little town.

The Christ of Mattosinhos has a quaint legend attached to the great crucifix which fills the whole space above the altar of the little chapel. One of the fishermen told me the story one day, as I lay on the sand and basked in the early summer sun. I had come over from Oporto for a rest after my new play had been produced at the Theatre Royal.

One day the right arm of the figure on the crucifix was missing. No one knew what had become of it; no one could account for the strange occurrence, least of all the good priest who ministered to the little parish. At night when he locked up the chapel the two arms of the figure were suspended from the cross; next morning when he unlocked the door and went to say his early Mass there was only one. Was it a miracle or a sacrilege?

The crucifix was no less honoured than of old, but all the faithful of the parish lamented constantly that the Christ should be obliged to remain so incomplete. The old women of the village—and there are more old women in Lessa da Palmeira than anywhere else in the world—met every evening to pray and tell their beads for the restoration of the right arm of their Patron.

"I feel sure," said Brazia, one of the oldest of these dames, "that the good God sent His arm off to work a real miracle. He will have given it to replace the arm which some poor man has lost by an accident. Who can say what use He may have made of it?"

"Nonsense, woman!" retorted Paula, almost her rival in years and in the use of her tongue. "Some rascal of a Jew must have stolen the arm and flung it into the river."

"But if it were in the river we would see it."

"It has no doubt floated out to sea."

"If it were in the sea we should have no storms."

"Hold your tongue, woman. The storms are sent for a purpose, and we shall see what we shall see."

Next day a terrible storm arose and none of the fishermen could put out to sea. Instead of attending to their boats, they gathered in the seaweed and broken timber flung on the beach by the fury of the waves, and cart-loads of this timber were stored in the baker's sheds to dry. The baker himself bought a lot of it from the fishermen to heat his oven.

A few days later the baker dismissed his apprentice for lack of respect. The boy had declared that the oven was bewitched.

"You wretched urchin!" cried the baker, purple with rage. "My oven bewitched! My oven, which bakes the best bread in the whole province—yes, and in the whole of Portugal for that matter!"

"I say it is bewitched and I repeat it," maintained the lad obstinately. "I went to put a log of wood on it this very morning, and every time I put the wood on, it jumped off again and the

flames rushed out and scorched me. I had to put the log back in the timber shed and leave the oven alone. May the good God let the devil carry me away if I am not speaking the truth! "

The baker got a new boy and for a couple of days all went well. But on the third day the boy came weeping, with a burned hand, and refused to go near the bewitched oven again. He was putting timber in the furnace and the timber jumped off every time he put it on; while the flames came out over his hand.

" Merciful Heaven, what a misfortune! " exclaimed the enraged baker. " If people get to think my oven is bewitched, I shall lose all my customers. There is only one thing to do. I shall call all my neighbours, all the fishermen, every one in the village, so that they may see that there is no foundation for all these silly tales spread by idle ragamuffins who do not want to work and may deprive me of my livelihood. Yes, I will ask the parish priest to come too, and I will feed the furnace under the oven in the face of them all."

So the good baker did, and partly to oblige him, partly out of curiosity, there was a vast multitude, headed by the parish priest, in and around his bakery. The baker himself took armfuls of wood from his store and threw it into the furnace. The flames fastened on the wood, and the oven was briskly heated as usual. The baker looked smilingly round at his audience, and said to the parish priest:

" Your Reverence can witness that there is no truth in the tale that my oven is bewitched."

And he took another armful of wood and threw it in.

But suddenly a dark log which lay among the rest flew violently back, and the flames rushed out and scorched the baker's arms and the faces of those standing nearest.

The commotion was intense, and every one ran back in a panic. Only the parish priest came forward and examined the rejected log more closely. Then he sent to the chapel for holy water, and sprinkled the smoking log until it was cool enough to lift. And he began to chant the " Te Deum " in thanksgiving for the miracle vouchsafed to his parish.

The log was indeed the missing arm of the Christ of Mattosinhos. And the baker's shop became a sort of shrine, visited by all the faithful not only in Lessa da Palmeira but in many villages and towns in the province, to the great profit and glory of the excellent baker.

Pious ladies from Oporto came to be present at the ceremony of restoring the recovered arm to the figure on the crucifix. And who could doubt that the whole incident was a miracle performed purposely to rekindle Christian faith and to rebuke the indifference of this age of unbelief?

Before starting on their perilous adventures beyond the seas the fishermen of Lessa, turned sailors, repair to the chapel and kneel before the great crucifix, to utter the simple prayer:

"May the arm of the Lord protect me in all the dangers of the sea."

II

Now it was believed in Lessa that the mother of the fisherman Raimâo was forty years of age. If her birth certificate could have made it known that she was fifty-two, no one would have believed it, and indeed no doubt the people were right. A woman may reasonably be considered as old as she looks, and it is pleasanter to be fifty and look forty than to be forty and look fifty.

She had been a very handsome woman and was still well worth looking at, with her clear skin, dark brilliant eyes, and perfect teeth. Her wavy hair was still untouched by grey, and her form was slim and well balanced as she walked. Her name was Anna, but the other women of the place always addressed her as "Madame Anna."

Anna's husband had been one of the most respected fishermen of the village, and during her nine years of widowhood no one had ever had the slightest reason to cast a reflection on her conduct. More than one of the well-to-do fishermen had sought her hand, but no one had succeeded in obtaining a promise from her.

She had two sons. The younger wished to study for a profession, so he was sent to school in Oporto. But after a time a run of bad luck in fishing made it impossible for the widow to keep him at school, and he was obliged to return to the village and take service in the boat of one of the fishermen, who wanted a lad to help him.

Roberto was a serious boy, silent and docile, but ever oppressed by a melancholy regret for the studies which he had been obliged to relinquish—studies which he had now no hope of ever being able to resume. When the sea was too rough for fishing, he would sit with the others mending the nets and watching the great waves dash against the lighthouse on the rocks. Sometimes his comrades rallied him on his seriousness, and then he would smile and say gently:

"I am not really unhappy. I do not know why it is, but the sea, the river, and the sky make me feel so small and lonely."

They laughed at his fancy, but all liked him.

The master of the fishing-boat had a pretty little daughter, and one day he said laughingly to Anna:

"This is your Roberto's future wife."

The mother smiled, but the boy blushed.

"And I am nowhere, I suppose?" said the elder brother, Raimâo, laughing too.

"Oh, my boy, I had forgotten you. Well, Isabel will be a woman one day, I suppose, and she will have a woman's right to choose. I have no doubt she will choose the husband who pleases her most."

The child slipped her little hand on Roberto's arm and murmured:

"I will choose this one."

Every one laughed at the little bit of babyish nonsense. But a few days later, Roberto went to the little chapel of the Christ of Mattosinhos and kneeling before the crucifix promised to build a splendid house for the glory of the town on the spot where his mother's cottage stood if the arm of the Lord would direct him to the way of fortune.

To the boy's excited imagination it seemed as if the right arm of the figure moved from the cross and pointed towards the distant horizon. He was but a child when he knelt down, but he rose up a man! He would be a sailor and seek riches beyond the sea.

That night when he knelt before his mother to ask her blessing, according to the good old custom of the province, he kissed her hand and his tears dropped on it. When she asked what was the matter, he smiled and asked again for blessing. Next morning he had disappeared.

A letter from Oporto told his mother that he had signed on a trading ship bound for Brazil.

III

Ten years had passed without Roberto ever having the chance of returning. One day a letter came from Oporto to the humble cottage in which he had been born, and next morning the handsome bronzed young sailor came to embrace his mother and brother.

He was now twenty-four years of age. Raimâo was twenty-six, and looked at least thirty-six. He had spent his life, so far, in constant struggle with the rough elements of wind and waves, out of doors in all weathers, and toiling to support those dear to him.

For Raimâo was married now. His wife was Isabel, the daughter of Roberto's former master, the pretty child who had taken Roberto as her sweetheart and given him the thought of seeking wealth for her sake in foreign lands.

Her father had fallen on evil days. He had lost boat after boat, and then an injury to his spine in helping to rescue a wrecked crew had made him a confirmed invalid. Anna had cared for him in his destitution, and when he died, Raimâo had given his name and a home to the orphan maiden. All three lived together in peace and comparative comfort, for Anna and her daughter-in-law were expert at making and mending nets, and Raimâo was indefatigable in gathering in the harvest of the sea.

When Roberto arrived in Lessa da Palmeira on a lovely morning at the beginning of June, he was received with as much acclamation as Solomon is said to have extended to the Queen of Sheba. The day after his arrival, all the fishermen took a holiday by leave of the masters, and a great feast was arranged on the strand. Baskets of lobsters, crabs, roast chickens from the cottage poultry yards, early fruit, and in fact all the simple dainties available to such humble folk were contributed by the thirty fishermen and their families who came to do honour to the returned wanderer.

Roberto filled his goblet with wine, and rose to drink to the health of his friends.

"I cannot tell you all how glad I am to see you again," he said. "Fortune has not treated me ill all these years, but my greatest good luck has been to find myself here once more among you all, my friends, of whom I have always thought. I am so happy to see my relatives again,—my mother, my brother, and you who are all like brothers to me."

"Here is another relative whom you must not forget to speak of too," said Raimâo, resting his hand on Isabel's shoulder.

"Oh, forgive me, Raimâo. My brother's wife is my sister, and next to my mother, I love you two best in the world. Your wife has a sweet name, the name of a saint."

"See what you did by going to Brazil!" exclaimed Anna, laughing and kissing Roberto. "You lost your little sweetheart."

"How was that?" asked the fishermen.

Anna related the story of the jesting offer made by Isabel's father and the little girl's choice of Roberto as her future husband.

All laughed heartily at the little tale. Raimâo laughed as heartily as the others.

"Since then the wind has changed," said he, "and our good parish priest, giving us his blessing in the chapel of Our Lord of Mattosinhos, made me captain of this fair little bark, and we have sailed until this moment on a calm sea with favourable breezes to waft us through life."

Roberto looked suddenly at Isabel, and she seemed to avoid his gaze.

"To the health of the company!" he exclaimed, raising his glass.

"To the health of Roberto!" cried all, standing up and drinking.

"All this seems like a dream to me," cried the good Anna, wiping her eyes. "My darling boy back again in Lessa da Palmeira, rich and happy. Thanks be to the Christ of Mattosinhos!"

Roberto sat silent for a while as if dreaming. Then he rose with a sigh and embraced his mother tenderly.

" Are you happy, my boy? " asked Anna anxiously.

" Why should I not be happy when I am with my own dear mother? "

" And yet you left our mother for so long to hunt for riches," observed Raimâo, half reproachfully.

" You have not forgiven me that. Well, perhaps you are right. It is folly to wish to possess much in this life, for we must soon leave all behind us."

When Roberto knelt before his mother that evening to ask for her blessing, she said to him with strange meaning:

" May God protect you and keep you from temptation! "

IV

In spite of his good fortune in Brazil and of the welcome which he received everywhere in the little town Roberto went about sad and as if lost in thought. He often went into the chapel and gazed as if in reproach at the mysterious arm of the figure on the cross which had appeared to point out the way of destiny to him. Then he wandered along the shore and looked dreamily across the sea.

Anna watched her son closely, and almost unconsciously she watched her daughter-in-law at the same time. She noted that Roberto seldom spoke to Isabel, but when he did it was with an indescribable air of bitterness, and the young wife looked at him furtively with a preoccupied expression when she thought herself unobserved.

Some days after Roberto's return, the two women were sitting by the window of the cottage, looking out over the sea. The elder brother was out in his boat; the younger was wandering by the shore. Anna led the conversation to the subject of her two sons, remarking the difference in their dispositions and praising the qualities of each. Isabel knitted a sock for her husband and replied to her mother-in-law's observations.

Suddenly Anna said:

" Is it because Roberto is comparatively a stranger to you that you seem so much more interested in him than in Raimâo? "

The young woman hesitated, blushed, and said:

" Not that, mother,—but, you see—Roberto has qualities which Raimâo does not possess."

" That is not the reason either."

" Oh, indeed, mother. . . ."

" Listen to me, Isabel," said the elder woman in a grave tone; " it is just a week since Roberto came back unexpectedly, and in that week you have changed a great deal. You are twenty-one years of age and I am fifty-two. I have seen a great deal of human nature, though not of the world, and I know that you are in love

with Roberto. You never loved my poor Raimâo—you married him to have a home and a shelter from the hardships of the world. Can you deny it? "

Isabel was silent. The night was an exquisite one. The murmur of the stream blended with the placid melody of the waves and the whisper of the breeze through the olive trees. The roses climbing over the cottage and the lilies in the garden breathed their soft fragrance to the warm air, and the deep blue sky was brilliant with its pattern of stars.

Anna, without removing her gaze from the fair face of her daughter-in-law, continued:

" Both are my sons and I love them both equally, but I love still more the honour of my family, and that is now in your hands. I have never had a daughter, but my son's wife is my daughter now, and because I love you as a daughter I speak to you like this. Roberto loves you. I believe he has always loved you in his vague poetic way since the day when your childish choice fell on him; but Raimâo loves you too. He is not poetic, he is not made for great passions, but he is honest, kind, and good. If—Heaven grant that it may not happen—but if anything should destroy his faith in you, it might work a terrible change in him, for calm natures are the worst when roused. Isabel, my child, I implore you to have a care—do not turn our little Paradise into Hell."

The younger woman wept softly and trembled. Then she raised her head and murmured:

" I do not know what to do, mother. He has asked me to meet him this evening behind the cliff. I dare not refuse to go, but I fear what he may have to say to me."

" Behind the cliff? "

" Yes, after supper. It is the first time he has ever asked me to meet him. You know there is to be a dance on the sands to-night, round the bonfires, and he insisted that I should meet him behind the cliff while the others are dancing."

" Well, you will not go."

" But what am I to do? Must I deceive him, say nothing, and let him wait there? "

" He will not wait in vain. Some one will meet him behind the cliff—his mother! "

" But what can you? . . ."

" I can put everything right. If I wait longer it may be too late."

" Here he comes, mother, with Raimâo. At least do not be cross with him now."

" Do not fear, my daughter. I have no idea of letting your husband suspect what I know."

V

The fishermen and their wives and daughters met after supper to dance the night away, that exquisite June night, on the smooth sands of Lessa da Palmeira. Raimâo, Anna, Isabel, and Roberto joined the others round the bonfires of dry pine wood flaring in a circle on the beach.

Every one was gay and happy, at least in seeming. The young men and maidens laughed, jested, and danced in anticipation of the beginning of the festival, which was held every June in honour of the Christ of Mattosinhos. The elders talked apart and drank one another's health in goblets of the red wine of the province, several skins of which had been contributed by the fishermen. Roberto, as a returned traveller, was the hero of the hour: he passed from one group to another, chatting, relating his adventures beyond the sea, and talking of what he meant to do for the glory of the little town and the honour of the Christ of Mattosinhos with the riches he had amassed in the years behind him—riches now lying safely in the bank in Oporto. He would give a new red lamp of solid gold to burn night and day at the foot of the crucifix; he would purchase his mother's cottage and build a fine house in its place, a house which would be the admiration of all the ladies and gentlemen who came from the city to breathe the sweet air of Lessa de Palmeira.

Presently the flutes and violins struck up the *cadêa*, the dance which always begins these rustic festivals, and the pairs formed up round the bonfires. Fresh fuel was thrown on, and the elders gathered round in groups on the sand to watch the dancers.

Roberto danced with Isabel, with some of the young wives of the fishermen, and with a couple of the girls. Then, as the night wore on, he slipped away behind the cliff.

Anna followed unperceived by the others, her heart torn by grief at the knowledge of the task before her. Roberto, seeing the form of a woman approaching in the shadow of the cliff, had no suspicion that it could be any other than Isabel, and he exclaimed in a low but penetrating voice:

"My love, how glad I am you have come. I cannot keep silence any longer. I must reveal my soul to you to-night!"

Then, looking more closely at the woman who approached without uttering a word, he cried:

"Mother! What are you doing here, so far from the rest?"

"I might ask you the same question, Roberto, if I did not know the reason for your being here."

"What? You know. . . ."

"I know everything."

There was a brief silence, broken by a sudden sound of sullen

moaning from the sea, as if in harmony with the sadness which weighed down the minds of mother and son. The night grew darker, and heavy clouds began to surge up from the horizon.

" Roberto," said Anna at last, " you expected Isabel to meet you here, but it is your mother who keeps the tryst. Do not attempt to deny that you have asked Isabel to meet you to hear a declaration of love from you—Isabel, your brother's wife! "

" She should have been mine. She was my little sweetheart; he stole her from me while I was away working to win her."

Anna looked fixedly at her son as he spoke these passionate words, and then she answered slowly:

" My son, you must not stay here. Think of the honour of our family. Isabel does not love you; if she did, she would not have married your brother. It was Isabel who told me of your mad request to her to meet you here, and that is why I have come. If she loved you, would she have told me? "

" Oh, mother, do not say that. I know she loves me."

" Silence, Roberto. I have sworn to myself and promised to my daughter that peace and honour shall abide in our home. You will leave Lessa de Palmeira to-day after daybreak, and you will not return to it until you return in all sincerity as my dear son, and bring me your wife—another daughter to me."

" Impossible! "

" It is your mother who commands you, your mother who is here to defend the honour of her daughter. I will tell all our friends, and Raimâo too, that you are too restless to settle down here. They may smile at you; better that than condemn you as the destroyer of our home. You will go? "

" I will go, mother."

They returned in silence to the groups dancing round the bonfires. Just before leaving the shadow of the cliff, Anna put her arms round Roberto's neck and kissed him tenderly.

The day was about to break, and the fishermen were unfastening their boats.

" What is this? " asked Roberto. " Going off to fish already? "

" Yes," answered his brother; " the tide is favourable and the catch should be fair. It will do us all good to rest and fish after our night's dancing."

" Raimâo, will you do me a favour? This night reminds me of my boyhood's days, when I fished for Isabel's father. Lend me your boat and do you go out in some other craft. I want to see what I can catch all alone."

" But can you manage the boat alone? "

" Oh, yes. I have no fear of that. But I have been so long a stranger to our fishing here that I would like to see if I can do as well as you who have spent all your life at it."

The men all clapped their hands, shouting:

" Long life to Roberto, the fisherman of Lessa da Palmeira! "

" To the sea, my first and last sweetheart! " cried Roberto.

He kissed his mother and knelt to ask her blessing. Then approaching Isabel, he bent to kiss her hand, and gave her a long look, before which she dropped her eyes.

All the fishermen set off in the boats, Roberto alone, as he had wished, in his brother's craft. The girls remained on the beach, dancing with one another and singing in unison with the receding songs of the fishermen.

Isabel withdrew from the others and sat on a rock, looking after the boats. Anna sat beside her and slipped an arm round her waist. Both women wept in silence.

The dance continued and the night gave place to dawn. The mother and Isabel rose to return to their cottage, and advanced to take leave of the others. Far away a voice was heard singing over the distant sea; a melancholy song of grief and farewell. Anna grew pale as she whispered:

" It is Roberto! "

Another voice answered it in a gay strain, chanting the Song of the Fishermen, and Anna, drawing Isabel closer to her, said smiling:

" And that is Raimâo, letting us know that all is well."

The light grew stronger and the last groups of the merry-makers broke up—women and the older men who had ceased their active lives as toilers of the sea, and now lived by mending nets and salting fish for sale in the city. Anna and Isabel paused at their cottage door to bid farewell to those who were going farther on, and Isabel cast a last lingering glance at the sea. Then she uttered a quick cry:

" Roberto's boat! Look, look, he is back already! "

The boat came nearer, but it was soon apparent that it was empty and was drifting at the mercy of the waves. It tossed about, now approaching the shore, now being driven out to sea.

As the distracted women ran towards the shore, a fishing smack with spread sail came swiftly to land. The men who stepped from her carried a burden, covered with oilskin, the nature of which was but too evident. Anna and Isabel threw themselves on the corpse which the fishermen laid gently at their feet, and the distressed mother raised her arms to Heaven:

" Our Lord of Mattosinhos, pity and pardon me," she moaned. " Roberto, my darling son, has lost his life, and through me, through me. Here in this spot, where he was to build a mansion, we have to build his tomb! "

Far in the distance the voice of Raimâo was heard, singing a merry strain.

THEOPHILO BRAGA

1843–1910

THE GREAT CLOCK OF STRASSBURG

SURELY that strange, rich legendary lore of days gone by is for us the chief quality of the Middle Ages. Through this it is that we see history as through a stained-glass window; it gives us the life of men with all its colour and reality. Probably the greatest figure of the time was that of His Satanic Majesty, who certainly most attracted the mind and hand of the artist. This sinister figure, coming from Persian mythology, marked the highest development of the religion of that era. Its effect in art was a continual striving after the grotesque, the record in sculpture of much ancient heathen superstition, and that peculiarly elusive symbolism of the highest period of Gothic architecture. The same idealisation of the principle of evil resulted in much that was morbid in the stories of the saints.

We all know that in early Christian times secular human knowledge was feared, and often even forbidden. It was regarded as useless and very dangerous, as ministering to that pride to which we are so prone, and as a blemish upon the childlike simplicity which brings man near to God. It then seemed impious even to study the laws of Nature, so that Roger Bacon and Sylvester II. were accused of sorcery; and human enlightenment is marked throughout its progress with a long train of martyrdoms. All who know their Bible well will recall that this view is supported by very high authority: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Many legends have come down to us, showing with what rigour and cruelty the Church enforced her condemnation of profane learning, and through what agonies of suffering the human spirit attained its emancipation. The story of Faust is only one among thousands.

It was a glorious spring day in the middle of the fourteenth century; the sun blazed in a cloudless sky, streaming dazzling white upon the Cathedral of Strassburg and kindling it to a radiant

brilliance, until the great church flamed like a white torch in the midst of a sordid world. The stained-glass windows gave back the light in beams of wonderful colours, as clear and vivid as those of the rainbow, and as mystically significant. Each stone, each separate bit of carving, each morsel of delicate lace-like tracery, in this masterpiece of inspired artistry, stood out in perfect beauty, and the lofty tower seemed to pierce the sky till its spires were lost in the everlasting blue.

In the great Square before the cathedral little groups of people were standing, talking idly, and these were joined by others, until at last a huge crowd had collected. A certain restlessness and expectancy was evident in all, as if they were waiting for some auspicious event which they knew was about to occur. They kept on looking upward, and furtive eager murmurings ran from group to group. It was clear that it was from the sky that they awaited some sign or apparition. Yet there was no eclipse, nor the dread visitation of a comet, things which in those days were full of awe and menace, and might have drawn all these folk together for the support which is given by mere numbers. What then could have caused the crowd to collect thus at mid-day?

In those ages of faith and worship there was nothing which more strongly appealed to the hearts and minds of the people than the great religious processions. For days before and afterward, nothing else would be thought or spoken of; and the fervour with which the whole population entered into these simple ceremonies made them the most poignantly touching expression of love and worship. But it was clear that these people were not collected for a procession.

Suddenly a horseman dashed up, and reined in his foaming steed at the very edge of the crowd. He wore the dark cloak and plumed hat of the nobility, and from the mingled curiosity and interest with which he watched the crowd, it was obvious that he was a stranger.

"What is all this fuss about?" he asked of a boy who stood near him, watching the scene with a sort of fearful apprehension. "This is no great festival nor saint's day. Your cathedral doors are not even open. Is there some great occasion in the town to-day?"

"What?" cried the boy. "Have you not heard the wonder of our great miracle? You must indeed have come from far! There is no more famous miracle anywhere in Germany than the great Clock of Strassburg. Do you see that fine statue of Our Lady up there on the tower? Well, in a few moments, when the clock sounds the first stroke of noon, you will see the Three Kings come out of the tower and kneel before that statue, offering their gifts; and on the last stroke, which sounds exactly as the sun reaches the zenith, the cock on the top of the spire will flap its wings and crow, and all the three figures will disappear."

Before the knight could reply, a sudden deep murmur, rising from the assembled crowd, warned them that something was about to occur, and the chimes rang out announcing the advent of noon. All waited in breathless silence, and every face was turned upward to the statue on the tower. Then came a sound like the rushing of mighty wings through the air, and a gentler whisper as of far-off voices. The knight sat fixed as a figure in stone, watching in entranced amazement this miraculous prodigy of the Three Kings, and holding all the time a tight rein upon his impatient charger.

The fame of this wonderful clock had already spread over many lands. Princes, bishops, and great noblemen would have given any price to obtain one like it for their palace, church, or castle; but the name and dwelling of the maker remained a secret, and all attempts to discover him had so far failed altogether. The clock was known everywhere as the Clock of Strassburg, and no word of its origin had ever been whispered at home or abroad.

For some moments the stranger was silent with astonishment. Then, turning to the boy who stood by his stirrup, "Do you know, my lad," he said, "who it was that made that extraordinary clock? Surely every city would wish to have the like! I have never heard the maker's name, but I have come all the way from France to see him."

"Sir," the boy replied; "I am very sorry, sir, but I may not tell his name. It is too dreadful—we are not allowed to say who made that clock. Oh yes, sir, I know who it was, but they threaten us with death if we tell. Sir—sir—it was my father." The tears were in the boy's eyes, and at the moment of his confession he broke into sobbing.

The cavalier leaped from his charger, and held out his hands to the boy. "But, my dear fellow, why did you not tell me? Where is your father? Do you weep because he is dead? I do not understand at all. His Majesty the King of France has sent me to find your father."

"Yes, sir, he is alive, if you can call it life. We often think it would have been happier for him if he had died before he had shown what wonderful things he could do. It was just his wonderful skill which brought him his misfortune."

By this time the crowd had separated, and the boy took the stranger knight to the little shop where his father lived. It was a clock-maker's workshop. An old man was seated on his bench with his face buried in his hands, over which fell his long wavy white hair. His attitude was that of profoundest thought or of extreme dejection.

The stranger threw his bridle over the hook beside the door, and then stood hesitating on the threshold, unwilling to break in upon

the old man's melancholy. The boy went up to his father, put his hand upon his shoulder, and spoke some words in a low voice, glancing uneasily toward the figure in the doorway. The aged craftsman drew himself up, turned toward the door, and beckoned to the stranger with his hand.

"Your lordship has done me the honour to come and see me from the King of France?" he asked, rising from his seat, but hesitating to advance.

"Yes, sir," said the other, "I have come at His Majesty's command."

"What can His Majesty, who is lord of everything, want of me, who can do nothing?"

"His Majesty has heard of your wonderful skill, and wishes you to come to Paris and set up a clock on the Law Courts, so that the equal division of the hours may afford to his people an example of order and of justice."

"I am greatly honoured," replied the old man, "and would do anything to serve His Majesty, if daylight had not been taken from me for ever. Look at my eyelids, sir. It is sixteen years since our cruel people put my eyes out, and from that day my life has only lingered on. I cannot die, yet my days and nights are only suffering. The ideas that come to me are a torture, for of course I cannot work without my sight. The only comfort of my misery is that I can tell this dear boy the secrets of clock machinery, so that he may some day make some use of them. Thus I leave him all I have to bequeath. Every stroke of my great clock across there is to me a stroke of torment; it is like the voice of a devil's mockery. I cannot sleep of nights, but count the hours and say that one more hour has gone from the living death which is all my portion."

The old workman spoke in tones of mingled grief and pride, and the contrast between his genius and the unhappy frame which held it was pitiful to witness. His head was bent over the sunny locks of his son, who stood in silence beside the old man, gazing upon the floor.

The courtier was indignant, and exclaimed: "How could any one be so fiendishly cruel as to plunge your great and wonderful spirit into darkness? How did it happen? I suppose it was some one who was envious of the surpassing excellence of your work. But I am afraid I give you pain. You shall tell your story to His Majesty himself; I pledge my word that he will give you what help it lies in the power of man to give."

And then, slowly and quietly, the old man told his sad story, while his deft fingers played with the boy's golden hair.

"His Reverence the Bishop of Lichtenberg commissioned a large clock for the Strassburg tower. He demanded an absolute guaran-

tee of its accurate timekeeping, lest any irregularity should disturb the services of the church. It took me two years of incessant work, for I felt that all my reputation was bound up in that clock. I tell you, my lord, that the art of clock-making could not go farther; it even shows all the great feasts of the Church. Beside its dial are panels in which the qualities of the seven planets are inscribed in verse; and it includes a special movement giving the motions of the sun and the phases of the moon. Above all is a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and at the first stroke of every noon the figures of the Three Kings come forth to adore her. Every one was astonished at the perfection of my work, and every day the Cathedral Square was crowded with people to see the prodigy of this show. Soon we heard that other cities wanted as grand a clock, and princes inquired for them for their palaces. You must understand, my lord, that anything of that kind would have detracted from the unique glory of Strassburg, and must at every cost be prevented.

"One night, tired with many hours of work, I was asleep in the room above here when there came a loud knocking at the door. I came down and opened it, and they told me that the clock had stopped. I dressed and went out to the tower, and having climbed the stairs found the clock going as well as ever. I turned to them and said so, but even as I spoke, they had seized me and were trying to throw me from the clock-tower into the market-place. I struggled for my life, and they could not throw me down; but presently I fell in a swoon. They then, it appears, decided to spare my life, but they blinded me and left me wounded and helpless. Then, as I screamed at their cruelty, they said that it had been intended that I should be burned alive in the Square, under the clock which they said I had made by black magic. They said that my guilt was proved by words engraved on the wheels of my clock-work, which I had set there, forsooth, as an invocation to the devil. They brought me back here to my poor boy, and so they left me."

The poor old man was silent for a while, his mind revolving that dreadful night. The courtly messenger then asked him whether his son might not go to build the clock for the Law Courts of Paris, but the clock-maker was difficult to persuade. His son, he admitted, was perfectly qualified for the work, but he feared for him a fate such as he himself had suffered. But the knight promised to protect the lad with his own life and to restore him safely to his father's arms as soon as the great work should be completed. In due time, therefore, the clock was installed in the tower of the Law Courts, and gave the desired example of order and of justice. But this same clock, two centuries later, gave the signal for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

The young workman returned to Strassburg to find his old father still in life. But now the unhappy man's poverty and grief were deeper and his spirit was darkened by the gloom of revenge. It was not long before he found his opportunity. Having groped his way up those stairs to where the great wheels were marking the hours, he wrecked the delicate mechanism, the offspring of his brain. And all the skill of Germany could not repair the great Clock of Strassburg.

JOSÉ MARIA EÇA DE QUEIROZ

1843–1900

THE THREE BROTHERS AND THE TREASURE

I

In the whole kingdom of Portugal the three Medranhos brothers, Rui, Guannes, and Rostabal, were the poorest and worst clad among the nobles.

In their dwelling of Medranhos, where the wind sweeping down from the mountain-side carried off roofs and dashed out windows, which they had no money to have repaired, they spent the winter afternoons, shivering under their rough garments made from goats' hair, walking about their bare kitchen and looking moodily at the great fireplace where for a long time past no spark of fire had burned, no meal had been cooked. When night came they devoured a lump of black bread, flavoured with garlic, and then, without a light, they crept across the courtyard, through the snow, to the stable, where they slept in the straw, taking advantage of the warmth they obtained from the company of their three miserable mares, which, as hungry as they were, roamed during the day trying to pick up a living on the bleak mountain-side. And their poverty made these gentlemen fiercer than wolves.

When spring came, one quiet Sunday morning the three brothers were wandering through the woods of Roquelanes trying to catch some wild creatures which they could use for food, or to find some of last autumn's fruit which they could add to their meagre meal of bread, while the three poor mares devoured the fresh April grass. Suddenly the three brothers came on a sort of cave in the rock, almost concealed by a thicket of brambles, and in the cave lay an old iron chest. It had three locks, and in each of them was a key. On the lid was an inscription in Arabic letters, hardly visible through the rust which covered the old box. And when the three locks were undone, it was full of gold pieces up to the brim!

The three brothers grew paler than wax at the sight of this unexpected treasure. Then plunging their hands feverishly into the

gold, they began to laugh—such peals of laughter that the leaves on the elms above them danced as if in harmony with their glee. And rising, they faced one another, breathing hard, and asking more by glances than by words what they were to do. Guannes and Rostabal began to dispute, but Rui, who was the most sensible of the three, as well as the tallest and strongest, raised his arms and gave his opinion that the gold, whether it came from God or from the devil, was their joint property, as it had been their joint find, and should be divided equally among them, after being weighed in a pair of scales.

This was agreed to. But now a difficulty arose. How were they to carry to Medranhos, up the slope of the mountain, a box so heavy as this was? After some consideration it was decided that Guannes should put some of the gold pieces in his pocket, and, as he was the lightest, should go to the neighbouring town of Retortilho and buy three large leather knapsacks, three loaves of barley bread, three lots of cooked meat, and three bottles of wine, so that they might refresh their weakened bodies, and then unpack and carry off the gold at their leisure. He was also to bring some corn for the mares, for in their joy at their good fortune they did not forget their poor beasts. They themselves had not had anything to eat since the day before, and they were weak and famished. The two remaining brothers would sit with their treasure and await the return of Guannes, and all could return home safely together when night fell, without any one being the wiser.

"A good idea," said Rostabal, who was tall and lean by nature, leaner still through hunger. "Now, Guannes, take some of the doubloons and be off."

But Guannes stood looking down at the shining contents of the box, nervously clasping and unclasping his fingers, and muttering discontentedly to himself. At last he said roughly:

"The box has three divisions, and each locks with a separate key. I will lock my division and take the key with me."

"Well, in that case, I will do the same," growled Rostabal.

Rui smiled.

"All right. No reason whatever to the contrary."

And each brother solemnly locked one of the divisions with its proper key, which he put in his pocket. Then Guannes, satisfied with this, leaped on his mare and rode off through the trees, singing as he went the refrain of an old ballad.

II

In the open space of the wood, opposite the shrubbery growth that had concealed the treasure and the brothers had cut away with their knives, a rivulet murmured its bright way through the rocks and widened into a still pool, from which it issued to fall in a

cascade down the steep slope of the wooded hill. Beside this there was a rough granite column, weather-beaten and covered with moss. Rui and Rostabal seated themselves at the foot of this column, their swords between their knees, keeping watch over their treasure, while their two mares browsed on the sweet spring herbage, glittering with daisies and buttercups. The birds flitted about in the branches of the elms, and a breath of violets was drawn out from the floral carpet at their feet by the warm beams of the ascending sun.

Rui had taken off his hat and was endeavouring to arrange the old battered plumes of it with the aid of his knife, and as he did so he began to consider something which had just occurred to him. Guannes had not wished to accompany the other two that morning to the wood of Roquelanes. What a thing Fate was! If Guannes had stopped at home in Medranhos the box would have been discovered only by the other two, and they alone would have had the right to divide the gold. What a misfortune—and this was the greater because Guannes would be sure to get rid of his portion very soon. He was a born gambler, and his part of the fortune would very soon find its way into other hands in the clubs and wine-shops.

"Oh, Rostabal, just think. If Guannes had passed this place alone and had found this gold, I am sure he would not have shared it with us."

The other brother started, and plucked at his long black moustache.

"The devil he would! You are right there. Guannes is as selfish as can be. Do you remember last year, when he won a hundred ducats at dice from the sword-cutler in Fresno, he would not lend me even three ducats to buy a new knife?"

"You see now," growled Rui triumphantly.

Both brothers rose at once, as if struck with the same idea. The tall grasses rustled and bent beneath their hurried steps as they paced up and down.

Rui began to speak first.

"You know that Guannes is a very sick man," he said. "That cough of his is getting worse and worse, and he brings up a lot of blood every night when the cough shakes him. He will not last till next winter, Rostabal, but before then he will have found means to spend the good ducats which ought to be ours. He will spend them badly too, in dissipations which will only hasten his death instead of doing him any good. Now, if we had that money, we could restore the fortunes of our house. You could have proper clothes and horses and equipments, and even a train of retainers, such as is only fitting for the head of an ancient family. You are the head of our house, the great house of Medranhos."

"He ought to be dead. He ought to die to-day," exclaimed Rostabal, throwing off all reserve. "What do you think?"

Rui grasped the arm of his brother and drew him along through the elms in the direction in which Guannes had set off singing.

"Over there, at the bottom of the clearing, there is a good place, right behind those shrubs. You must do it, Rostabal; you are the strongest and most expert. A stroke between the ribs will settle all at once. And it will only be an act of justice, for God knows how often Guannes has sneered at you in the taverns and gaming-houses, at you, the head of our great house, just because you have no book-learning. He has called you a swine, a blockhead, a . . ."

"To the devil with him," snarled Rostabal, his dark face growing crimson with rage.

"Come."

They crept forward, hiding behind the shrubs, gay with spring blossoms, while the birds sang and the bright sun warmed the sweet-scented air. Rostabal took his sword from the scabbard and held it behind his back. Rui, pulling his moustache, watched the sun, which had now begun to descend over the slope of the hills, and endeavoured to calculate the time. A flock of crows passed over the tree-tops, cawing loudly in their flight. And Rostabal, watching them as they disappeared, began to grumble again at the length of time that good-for-nothing Guannes was wasting in the town, while they were there starving and longing for a drink of wine.

At last! They could hear the strains of an old ballad sung gaily in the distance; the same ballad which Guannes had chanted as he went down the slope to the town.

Rui uttered an impatient exclamation. Now they could hear the mare's hoofs resound on the silent mountain road, and presently a red plume appeared waving from the rider's hat just round the edge of the wood.

Rostabal slipped round silently under cover of the blossoming shrubs, and as Guannes came level with him he uttered a loud cry which caused the rider to start and turn in his saddle. In an instant the sharp point of the finely-tempered weapon had entered his throat, and with a hoarse moan he fell sidewards across his mare, swayed helplessly, and tried to regain his balance. Rui sprang forward and seized the bridle, whilst Rostabal, dragging the unfortunate man from the saddle, plunged his sword again and again into his throat and chest.

The evil deed was done.

"The key!" cried Rui.

And snatching the key from the pocket of the dead man he led the way towards the spot where the box was hidden, leading the

frightened mare. Rostabal cleansed his sword in the brook, and washed the blood from his clothes and face, for in dragging Guannes off his saddle the blood of the wounded man had poured all over him. Then, shaking the water from himself like a dog, he followed Rui to the granite pillar.

The mare began to graze, still laden with the bags containing the provisions and other stores which Guannes had purchased in Retortilho. Rostabal stopped at the spot where the brook broadened out into a still pool, and bent over it to see if his reflection showed any traces of what he had just done. Rui took out his knife, saying:

"I am going to open the parcels now, so that we can have something to eat before we do anything further."

Passing close behind the stooping figure of Rostabal he paused, and calmly, as if piercing a wine-skin, he drove the sharp blade between his shoulders, right through the heart.

Rostabal fell into the pool without uttering a sound. He lay face downwards, his hair floating on the still surface of the water. Rui caught hold of his leather belt, to take from it the key which had been placed in the pocket of the belt for safety, and the blood gushed from the wound in the dead man's back in a torrent over his hands and clothes.

III

The three keys of the box were his now, and his alone! And Rui, stretching out his arms, breathed his relief and joy. Then he packed the gold into the three wallets and slung one on the back of each mare, and having refreshed himself with the food and wine, and given his beasts a meal of corn, he set off, as night fell, for Medranhos, where he buried the gold in the cellar.

His joy was great. When only whitening bones, picked by the crows in the wood through which no one ever passed, should be left, he would remain the magnificent lord and master of Medranhos, and when the old house should be rebuilt and the ancient chapel restored he would have a private chaplain and would have masses said for the souls of his dead brothers, who had died suddenly in their sins.

He thought it all out as he sat drinking in the deserted hall, after he had carefully stabled the three mares. How would he account for the death of his two brothers? Well, of course they had died bravely, as sons of the house of Medranhos should, fighting for their country against the Turks. He alone was left to support the honour of the ancient house.

He opened the wallets, and let the gold coins slip through his fingers and rattle on the stones of the cellar. How lovely the gold was; how clear its tinkle! And it was all his own. But now he

felt very hungry, and he searched in the bottom of the wallets to see if there was anything left to eat. In one he found a fat roast turkey, which no doubt Guannes had bought for his own private eating, and some more bottles of wine. How delightful to be able to eat and drink as much as he wished, and not have to share with any one!

He dug further into the wallet—it was the one which had been on Guannes' mare. More surprises; more delights. Guannes had certainly known how to cater. There was another parcel, containing fruit, sweet cakes, and chocolate. And a jar of olives. Lastly a flagon of clear bright wine.

Rui enjoyed his supper. He ate and drank to his entire satisfaction. The crows had long since gone to their roosts in the trees, and the mares slept in the stable, happy and satisfied with their day. The brook sang on its way to where the two corpses lay, silent and helpless, under the stars.

Rui lifted one of the bottles of wine and looked at it through the light of the wax candle which Guannes had not forgotten to add to his stores. The wine was amber and clear. Certainly it was good and could not have been bought cheap. He took off the seal, poured the wine into a beaker and drank slowly. How soon his blood was warmed through by this rare wine! He emptied the bottle and opened another. But suddenly a thought came to him. Next day he would not be able to leave the house, and he would need all the food and drink he could command. If he went out, who would guard the treasure?

He stretched himself on the floor and began to plan how he would refurnish the old house. Everything would be of the very best, and he might even think of marrying into one of the old families, and having heirs. Why not, since his two brothers had died nobly in defence of their country?

Suddenly a thought came to him. Why not take the gold back and bury it under the rock where it had lain for so long? No one alive had ever known it was there; no one could know now, since the only two who had been present at its discovery were dead. He rose and began to pack the gold into the wallets again, so that he could load the mares and take the treasure back to where no one would be able to find it. He could lock it all again in the box there and keep the three keys himself.

He would not wait until morning. It was too dangerous. Supposing some one found the bodies of his brothers. He would go at once and bury the corpses and then put the gold in the box.

But, first of all, he would have a draught of that last bottle of wine, which seemed so clear and bright, and which would give him strength for what he decided to do after his toilsome day. It was a smaller bottle than the others, so the wine must be stronger.

After all, he must give Guannes his due; he knew how to cater. No doubt he had intended to keep this rare bottle of wine for himself—the greedy, selfish rascal.

Rui went out to see that all was quiet, and then came back, sat down, and poured out a goblet of the amber wine. It had a perfume which he did not know, but no doubt that was due to the grapes. It was so long since he had tasted really good wine. And he took a long draught.

Merciful Heavens, what was that?

A flame of fire seemed to consume him, tearing his very vitals. He rose, staggered, could not collect his senses, and then rushed out to drink from the brook, to try to cool his burning throat. No use! The more he drank the more terrible the torture grew, and as he ran on and on he was brought up in his rush by something soft. It was the body of his brother Rostabal, floating at the edge of the pool and already torn by the beaks of the crows.

He dashed the body away and ran on, still gasping and clutching at his throat. Lower down the hill the sparkling cascade murmured, and all was still and peaceful under the rising moon.

Rui fell on his hands and knees and crept onwards, moaning and praying. Mother of Heaven, what had happened to him? He rolled along in his agony, clutching at the grass until he was stopped by something which lay on the side of the path. It was the body of Guannes.

In a flash, Rui now understood. He rose to his feet by a supreme effort. All was clear to him. The small bottle of bright wine, the dainty food, the subtlety of the whole plan; and the anxiety of Guannes to have his own key first of all! And lying down in his torture he dug his nails into the stiffening face of his brother and moaned with his last gasp:

"Traitor! Thief! Poisoner!"

. . . . . .

It was true. When the bodies were found and inquiries were made, it was known that Guannes had gone first of all to a chemist and bought a flask of poison, with which he said he wanted to clear the old house of rats. He had next bought a bottle of rare wine, had taken some of the wine out, and no doubt had mixed the poison with the remainder. Then he had hidden the bottle amid the daintiest of the food, in the certainty that his brothers would want it first. Thus he alone would survive to get the three keys and possess the treasure.

JOSÉ VALENTINE FIALHO D'ALMEIDA

1857–1911

HER SON

It was early in the morning when she arrived at the station of Pampilhosa, the junction where the trains from Lisbon stopped on their way through the province of Beira. She was a little woman, aged more by hard work and privation than by years, sallow, small featured, and quick in her movements as a little grey mouse. She was dressed in poor but decent black, and her brown feet and legs were bare, after the custom of the peasant women of Beira. No one took much notice of her, and she gave but little heed to the persons at the station.

She carried a closed basket, and she had walked all the way from Vacariça, some five miles from the station, through the woods and fields, where the winter gorse bloomed and hurt her feet with its sharp prickly shoots, and the barberry brightened up the undergrowth with its brilliant scarlet berries. As she came near the station a porter called out to her to keep away from the railway line, as it was dangerous: the train might come at any time.

Timidly, the little woman explained to him that she had come from the country; she did not mean any harm by walking near the rails, she wanted to get to the station, because her son, her only son, was coming by the train from Lisbon. It was thirty years since she had lost her husband, and her boy was then three years of age; he was all she had in the world, and he had been in Brazil for ten years. Now he was coming back to her by the train from Lisbon.

The porter took little heed of what she said. He indicated the entrance to the station and went about his business. In the station she looked about timidly everywhere, into the waiting-rooms, the refreshment room, the office, asking everywhere if any one had seen a tall young man, rather dark, with a scar on his right cheek, and short curly hair, because, if so, it was her son, who was to arrive at any moment by the train from Lisbon.

Some people did not answer her. Others smiled indulgently at the poor little peasant woman, and said the train from Lisbon had not come in yet. The one who showed her most civility was a soldier who was going to join his regiment in Luzo and had

arrived at the junction by the train from Coimbra. His train would not arrive until night, and he had to spend the whole day at the station. So he was glad to make room for the little woman on the bench beside him and listen to her chatter to pass the weary hours.

The train from Lisbon rattled in, and the little woman rose trembling, her eyes eagerly fixed on the passengers descending from the carriages. There were not many of them, and none of them in the least resembled the expected traveller from Brazil.

"Never mind, mother," said the soldier kindly. "Better go home and come again when the next train from Lisbon is due."

"And when will that be?"

"Half-past five in the afternoon."

"Oh, I cannot go home. I will wait here. Supposing the train came in before I could get back, and I missed him! How disappointed he would be. For, you do not know—he is my only son, and he has been in Brazil for ten years."

So she sat down again, and the soldier heard all her poor little history: how her husband had died, leaving her with this boy, whom she had brought up so carefully; how he too had been a soldier, and how she had worked to live and send him a little money while he served; how they had both worked afterwards, but the country was so poor and money was so hard to get; how at twenty-three years of age he had emigrated to Brazil, but he had not had good luck there either; he was not strong, and he had tried all sorts of things without much success. Lately his letters had all been full of longing to get home and work for his mother in his own country; he had been very ill with that dreadful fever, and he had managed to save enough money for the voyage home and for his mother to live on until he should be well again. Oh, but he would soon be well now; she would take such care of him, and the good air of his native village would set him up after the bad climate in which he had fallen so ill.

The soldier offered her some food from his knapsack, but the little woman refused with profuse thanks. She was not hungry; she was accustomed to do with so little, and she had plenty of food in her basket—a chicken, some cheese, and a loaf, and a small skin of wine. It was for her son, and when he came, if the soldier would accept, they would all eat together. It would be so pleasant for all of them, and she was sure he would like her son, who had been a soldier too. But did he think her son would come by the afternoon train?

The soldier tried to assure her that no doubt he would, and gave her his arm to walk along the platform a little. Some of the passengers in the waiting-rooms slept on the benches; others gossiped to while away the hours of waiting, for all were waiting for one train or another. The children ran about gaily, looking at every-

thing: at the clocks, the semaphores, the telegraphic apparatus, the first-class refreshment room gay with winter flowers, the cottages of the railway officials with their fanciful little gardens. A few young girls joined their voices in one of the old folk-songs of penetrating sadness, blended with simple sweetness, which still linger in that sacred land of Beira, nucleus of the strength of the Portuguese nation, and still the centre of all that is purest in the humble charities of family life.

Two or three small trains came in, each as it whistled on its approach causing the little woman to start and tremble. As the last of these departed she ventured to approach the station-master.

"You will pardon me, sir. But when will he come?"

"When will who come?"

"My son. But you do not know. . . ."

"No, indeed, I do not know. Where is he coming from?"

"From Brazil, sir."

"Train from Lisbon, half-past five this afternoon."

"And . . . if he does not come to-day, when will he come to-morrow?"

"But woman, dear, the trains from Lisbon will be the same to-morrow as to-day." The station-master smiled.

"Please pardon me, sir. I am from the country, and I am expecting my son. A tall young man, rather dark, with a scar on his right cheek. . . ."

The station-master hurried off to see to the arrival of another local train. The little woman seemed to grow smaller still, as she sank down on a bench and rested her basket on the platform. The soldier was some way off, chatting to a stray acquaintance.

The December day wore on, grey and misty, one of those days which seem to be all one long vista of sky and earth, with no intervening horizon to break the colourless monotony. Even the sparrows were depressed, and shivered in close groups on the station roof, and the dull clouds hung in the windless air.

At one o'clock the soldier unbuckled his knapsack, calling out gaily:

"Dinner-time, all the company!"

At the word "dinner" all roused themselves. The better-class passengers went to the refreshment rooms; the poorer ones took out parcels of various sizes and shapes. Some of the women went off some way from the station to pick up sticks and make a fire with which to heat their tins of coffee or soup. And the occupation resulted in a general loosening of tongues.

"Come, mother," said the soldier. "I have enough for two."

But the little woman refused. When her son came, then she would be able to eat; they would all eat together. Just now she was not hungry. But she had a chicken, cheese, bread, and wine;

they would have a feast together. She had a pig at home, but she did not want to have it killed until her son came; he would enjoy the hams and the sausages. And she had chickens and ducks too, all waiting for him. She herself required so little. An old woman is not like a young man, and he had been ill too—he must have good food to bring him round. No, she could not eat, not until she had seen him, her son, her only son, whom she had not seen for ten years.

The soldier ate his dinner with a good appetite. He had barley bread, goat's milk cheese, and dried codfish stewed with tomatoes, vinegar and a trifle of garlic, in an earthenware jar. When he had eaten he threw the crumbs to the shivering sparrows and went off to the refreshment room. The little woman sat patiently waiting, her gaze fixed on the dull grey sky.

"Here, mother," said the soldier. "A finger of wine. You must take it, just to drink your son's health."

She smiled humbly, hesitated, and then accepted gently.

"My son's health, soldier, and yours too."

"Ten years is a long time, mother. Your son will have altered a good deal!"

She looked up startled.

Altered? Her son altered? She had never thought of such a thing.

To her in her thoughts, in her prayers, he had always been the same. A tall lad of twenty-three, dark of complexion but with blue eyes, never strong—he had had too little to eat in his childhood to grow strong—but her own boy, her only one. In what way could he alter?

She began to tell the soldier what she knew of his life in Brazil: how, when he went out first, he had good luck. He found work in a tannery. Then the hope of earning more money led him to go to the interior, and his letters grew rarer; perhaps two or three in a year. There were so many reasons for this: the distance was so great, he had to work such long hours for so little money; the climate was bad and he was often ill. No comforting words ever came; only hopes that things might improve, and they never did. He begged his mother to pray that he might live to see her again, that he might get better work, that he might grow strong and bring her back enough to keep her from misery in her latter days.

"Do have a mouthful, mother. This cod with tomatoes is so good."

She shook her head and went on talking, as if to keep her son before her eyes. A good lad, no one could say that she had not brought him up well, but they were so poor, and he had never been strong. Now, perhaps, his native air would do him good.

"And he will bring you back a few dollars, no doubt."

" Whatever he may bring, it will be riches to one who has nothing but the blessed day and night, which God gives us and no one can take away. Let him only come himself; that will be enough. Because, you see, he is my only son, and I lost his father when he was three years old."

An electric bell rang and she started up.

" Is it the train from Lisbon? "

All the children laughed, and the soldier smiled too.

" It is only two o'clock, mother. The train comes at half-past five."

The slow afternoon passed by, and the early December darkness closed in. The soldier's cigarette went out and he slept on the bench. Still the little woman stared wistfully into the growing night, her eyes wide open, though she had been awake since dawn.

The station lamps were lighted, and the afternoon trains began to arrive at the junction, each heralded by the rattle of the points and the shrill whistle of the approaching engine.

First a local train came sweeping through the pine woods of Valdoeiro, then the train from Figueira whistled in the far-off darkness, and the next to arrive was the Oporto express with its great white and crimson eyes gleaming as it rushed in.

Ten minutes to wait for coal and water. The hungry passengers rushed to the refreshment rooms, and the porters were busy answering questions, carrying wraps, opening and shutting doors. The little woman stopped one of them timidly.

" And the train from Lisbon, sir? "

" Half-past five. Next train in. Stand back, please."

The long Oporto express thundered off, and the little woman, half sobbing with excitement, strained her eyes in the direction of Lisbon. The train was coming. It seemed too good to be true.

The soldier spoke some cheering words, but she did not hear him. All her faculties were centred in the watch for the coming son. Her hands clasped and unclasped unconsciously. At last the whistle sounded, faint at first, and growing clearer and higher across the pine woods.

The train thundered alongside the platform. There was an indescribable noise: porters shouting; passengers talking excitedly; men selling water, selling cakes, newspapers, chocolate, oranges. The little woman dashed among them, scanning the faces of the third-class passengers as they got out—pushed aside and almost trampled on as she ran, unaware of anything but that here in this very train was her son, her only son, whom she had not seen for ten years. He must be cold, perhaps hungry; she must find him and take him home at once. It would be a long walk, but at least they would be together. And when they got home, she would

light the fire which she had left ready laid, would make hot coffee, and how happy they would be at their evening meal.

A stout middle-aged man nearly fell over the little woman as she ran on, and with an exclamation he seized her arm to steady her, muttering an apology. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"Why, Rosa! It is Rosa of Vacariça."

She looked up at him uncomprehendingly.

"Don't you remember me, Rosa? Clemente, your former neighbour. I have just come from Brazil to see the old home again. Ah, woman, if you knew how glad I am to see the old place again!"

He laughed, adding:

"There is no one here to meet me, for I did not say I was coming. I wanted to give every one a surprise. How glad they will all be, for I have done well out there."

"But my son? Is he still in the train? You must have come together."

Clemente uttered a stifled exclamation.

"Come and have something to eat with me."

"Thanks, I will. But I must wait for my son. You know where he is. Perhaps he did not think I would come to meet him. Go and tell him, Clemente. I will wait here, and then we can all have dinner. I have brought it with me. Make haste, Clemente, please. Tell him his mother is waiting here."

Clemente hesitated, and pulled his hat further over his eyes as if to hide the sudden pallor of his face. And as the little woman raised her eyes to his again, he put his arms round her thin shoulders and stooped to look into her anxious face.

"Rosa, my dear woman, old neighbour. I had forgotten that you could not know. It breaks my heart to tell you, but you must learn it somehow. Your son . . . your son died on the voyage over."

Not a sob, not a cry did she utter. She pulled her thin black shawl closer round her shoulders, and her basket still in her hand, her head down, walked quickly out of the station.

Clemente was about to follow her, but he hesitated. He would see to his luggage, get a cab, and take her home. He would be sure to overtake her on the road.

On, on the little woman went, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. The lights and noise of the station were left behind as she hurried on, her bare feet making no sound on the mist-clogged road. She passed on to the common where the gorse pricked her ankles, but she felt nothing. She went on without taking note of where she was going.

The train from Lisbon had left the station, whistling as it went,

and now it came rushing with gathering speed along the edge of the pine woods. Its great eyes gleamed redly into the night; and the plume of smoke bent backwards over its length gave it the likeness of some gigantic infernal horse, let loose to bring death and destruction on the world. On it came round the curve of the rails, and its red eyes seemed to fascinate the little woman, to call her to themselves with irresistible force. She thought of nothing, she went on, on where those eyes called her.

When daylight came, they found all that was left of the little woman. Her basket lay at some distance from the rails, still full of the dinner she had brought for her son.

AFFONSO BOTELHO

19TH CENTURY

THE CUP OF TEA

I

It is not very many years ago that the journey from Oporto to Regoa had to be made partly by stage-coach and partly by rail, as the country permitted.

The stage-coach, drawn by six powerful horses, stood at the point of departure from the offices of the Coaching Company in Oporto, awaiting the final arrivals. A wild tumult was going on round the coach, some passengers declaring they could not get the places they had booked, others claiming luggage which they could not see in the imperial. The not exactly edifying observations of the porters punctuated the general turmoil.

A young man sat in one of the places near the door. He had taken his seat early, and his luggage was all in order. The other places were all filled, with the exception of the one opposite to him, which appeared to be reserved for some passenger who had not been able to arrive in time. The driver gathered up his reins, and the guard began to sound the signal for departure on his horn.

Suddenly a strange apparition came round the corner—a fat man, waddling like a duck, puffing in his haste, and waving an enormous umbrella in the direction of the coach. After him two porters toiled along under a load of luggage.

The guard swore heartily, causing an abrupt diversion in the melody he was just extracting from his horn. The luggage was hauled up to the imperial, and the fat passenger climbed into the vacant place. He found room with difficulty for his umbrella and for an ample rain-cloak.

The guard resumed his broken melody and the horses set off, rattling along the stony streets of Oporto in the direction of the road leading to the railway station of the Minho-Douro line. The fat passenger seemed to be annoyed about something, for he muttered impatiently to himself and fidgeted in his seat. At last he caught the eye of the young man opposite, João de Sousa.

"It is too bad, sir," he exclaimed. "Just think, I could not get my cup of tea!"

João de Sousa did not answer, but looked interrogatively at the fat man, who, thus encouraged, went on:

"You see it has always been my custom to take a cup of tea after my luncheon. Just a cup of strong black tea. I was in such a hurry to catch the coach that I did not wait for tea just now. I cannot tell you how I miss it. You see, sir, when a man comes to my age habits are everything, and it is really dreadful to have to break through your habits. Now I know I shall be miserable throughout this whole journey because I could not have my cup of tea. You are young, sir, but take the advice of a man who is of regular steady habits. When once you form a steady habit, do not let anything put you off it."

João de Sousa felt amused at the communicative nature of his opposite neighbour. Wishing to humour him into further talk he said:

"But when we get to the railway station you will be able to get tea in the refreshment room."

"To be sure. I had not thought of that. It will be a little bit late after my luncheon, but still it will be something."

When they got to the station the train was already at the platform. All rushed into the refreshment room to prepare for the train journey, some by drinking a glass of wine and eating some bread and fruit, others by purchasing food at the counter to eat in the train.

The fat man sat down at one of the tables and looked round for a waiter. There were few waiters and many customers. At last he attracted the attention of a waiter and ordered a cup of tea. He was about to go into particulars about the tea, but the busy waiter had to attend to other orders. At last João de Sousa, when going off to take his place in the train, saw the fat man preparing to enjoy his favourite beverage.

Presently he came rushing out and climbed into the train just as the whistle sounded. He took the seat opposite to João de Sousa, and wiped his face with a brilliant silk handkerchief.

"Well?" João de Sousa smiled his inquiry.

"My dear boy, it was green tea the waiter brought me. I can never drink green tea!"

II

The train passed through the magnificent landscape of the North. The mountains, clad with pine and larch woods and crested with snow, looked down on the undulating fields, broken here and there by tile-roofed farms, and brightened by the silvery gleam of the mountain brooks.

Night was coming on. The setting sun had gone below the line

of hills which formed the continuation of the mountain chain, and the evening mists crept up in the valley.

The fat passenger saw no beauty in the scene. He yawned and fidgeted, and uttered impatient exclamations under his breath.

João de Sousa turned from the window where he had been feasting his eyes on the passing panorama. He overheard a moan, ending in the single word "tea."

"Still thinking of tea?" he asked with a smile.

"My dear sir, when one has formed a habit, it is impossible to lay it aside. Let me advise you never to allow anything to break through your habits. And that blockhead of a waiter brought me green tea. I can only drink black tea."

"Well, you can soon have your cup of tea, all the same."

"Where?"

"We leave the train at Cahide and take another stage-coach."

"Ah, so we do! I had not thought of it. Many thanks for reminding me. I can get tea at the inn where the coach starts."

And the fat passenger began to hum contentedly to himself, until he fell into a heavy doze, lulled by the motion of the train. He did not open his eyes again until roused by a gentle shake given by João de Sousa.

"What is it? Where are we?"

"We are at Cahide, and we must get out here and take the coach."

"You are very kind, sir."

And he began to gather up his luggage.

Two stage-coaches were drawn up outside the inn, one on the way to Villa Real and the other to Regoa. Passing the restaurant on his way to the coaches, João de Sousa came on the fat passenger engaged in a violent argument with the waiter. He stopped to ask if he was going to Regoa or to Villa Real.

"I am going to Regoa, sir. Just fancy, what an awful thing! I cannot get my cup of tea!"

"That is a very serious matter indeed," returned the young man gravely.

"Serious! I believe you. What sort of a restaurant is this? What sort of people keep the inn, I ask you? There is not a grain of black tea in the place."

"All passengers for Regoa take their places, please," called out the guard, who was a picturesque figure in the old coaching costume of the province: short astrakhan jacket, high boots reaching to the knee, velveteen breeches, and fur cap.

The fat passenger again seated himself opposite to João de Sousa.

"So that you have been disappointed again, sir?"

"Do not speak of it. It is too awful. What a journey to make without my cup of tea!"

" But you will soon have another chance of getting tea."

" Oh, where? "

The poor man brightened up a little.

" In Amarante, where we change the team."

" Oh, I am glad. You are very good, sir."

The coach rattled on through the country roads. The passengers slept in various attitudes, in spite of the jolting of the vehicle and the loud cracking of the whip with which the driver encouraged his steeds. João de Sousa alone remained awake, watching the landscape flit by under the gleam of the moon, the trees, the hedges, the lines of light from the houses of a village perched on the hill-side. The dogs at a farm barked at the coach as it thundered by.

Presently they came to the ancient bridge of Amarante, the origin of which is lost in the mists of antiquity, and the coach passed into the narrow stony street, and pulled up outside the celebrated old coaching inn of the Capadeira.

The dining-room of the inn was full of tobacco smoke and the odour of chocolate and warm oil. The waiter advanced, bowing and smiling, to show the travellers to their seats, and presently a really excellent supper was served.

João de Sousa did ample justice to the stewed capon and good wine of Valdepenas, and looking round he caught a glimpse of the fat passenger sitting at a corner of the table, waiting anxiously to get speech with the busy waiter.

" Waiter, I want a cup of tea, strong black tea, mind. No other will do."

" Sir, in an instant. I must just serve the supper, and then I will order the tea for you. What will you have for supper, sir, stewed capon or roast mutton? "

" I cannot eat anything until I have had my tea. Don't forget now, strong black tea."

The waiter continued serving the great tureens full of capons stewed with all manner of succulent additions, and soon tongues began to be loosened, and a buzz of general conversation could be heard. Great hilarity prevailed in the neighbourhood of a jolly priest from Douro, who told rollicking stories to the delight of the company. The waiter stopped to listen too in the intervals of his service, and the bottles of good wine were passed merrily round the board.

The fat passenger, wrapped in his cloak, waited patiently in his corner.

Presently the landlord of the inn made his appearance in the doorway.

" Ladies and gentlemen, the coach will start in five minutes. The team is in, and the luggage is being put in the imperial."

There was great excitement and confusion. The jolly priest

called the waiter and ordered some provisions to be put in a basket for use on the journey. Every one rushed to secure places in the coach. As João de Sousa rose with the others, he heard the distressed voice of the fat passenger:

" And my tea? Waiter, what about that tea? "

" In one minute, sir. I will bring it as soon as I can."

All had taken their places except the fat passenger, who stood at the inn door stamping with impatience. The coachman cracked his whip, and the guard blew a resounding blast on his horn. As the coach had to climb the mountain for some distance a strong team of twelve oxen had been yoked, gay with their scarlet head-fringes and jingling brass bells. When the stiffest part of the ascent was over, they would be replaced by horses at the next stage.

The guard called to the fat passenger:

" Take your place, sir, please. I can wait no longer."

He was just beginning to sound the signal for the start, when the waiter came running, a steaming cup of tea on a tray carried in both hands.

The fat passenger had one foot on the step of the coach. He uttered a cry of joy as he seized the cup and raised it to his lips. But the next instant he cried out in distress, and put the cup back on the tray.

" Impossible to drink this tea, waiter. It is simply boiling hot. What do you bring it like that for, with the coach just starting? "

And he climbed into his place opposite João de Sousa, tears of pain and annoyance starting from his eyes.

The young man looked at him sympathetically.

" And to think," moaned the fat passenger, wiping his scalded mouth, " that I have not been able to get my tea! "

III

The stage-coach climbed the hill slowly for five hours, dragged by the slow but powerful oxen. A fine rain fell, and the landscape was cold and rather depressing. Enormous old chestnut trees bordered the mountain road, the rain pattering on their leaves, and the wind whistling through their branches. Here and there streamlets ran from the mountain snows to feed larger brooks in the plain leading to the mighty Douro.

The driver walked beside the leader of the team, encouraging the oxen, and directing them with stick and voice. His monotonous " Ola! " and " Arre! " were the only sounds which broke the stillness except the movement of wind and water. All the passengers slept, lulled by the slow motion of the coach, except João de Sousa, who watched the passing scene. Near the road they passed a granite house, with two immense cactuses, twisted like serpents,

climbing at each side of the porch up to the roof, on which the moon, emerging from the racing clouds, cast strange fantastic reflections.

It was the chill moment of the turn of the night, forerunner of the dawn.

A little higher up they passed a thatched cottage perched on a spur of the mountain and overhung by a massive block of stone, which looked as if it might fall at any moment. The guard told João de Sousa that a witch lived there.

The road grew narrower and the trees more stunted as they neared the summit. The grey light in the sky gave place by degrees to a clearer tint, and at last the sun broke through the clouds, bathing the mountain in many-coloured beams, purple, pink, yellow, all the hues of an Alpine sunrise.

The coach rounded the corner of the mountain shoulder and drew up at an inn. The village lay beyond, the village of Quintella, scattered along the crest of the rocky slope. The oxen were removed from the yoke, the yoke itself taken off the coach, and those of the passengers who were awake descended to stretch their legs and to breathe the pure morning air, so exhilarating after the close atmosphere of the coach during the night.

João de Sousa walked along admiring the wild grandeur of the mountain scenery. Far as the eye could reach, peak after peak extended, changing their outlines with every step taken, and losing themselves in the blue mists of the distance. Lower down at the foot of the slope before them shimmered a wide expanse of water, and the rustling trees framed the whole lovely picture. Villages and single cottages seemed like toy houses dropped by children at their play. And the great crest of the Cordilheira do Marao looked down on the scene, as if guarding it against the invasion of the north wind.

As the young man paused to draw a breath of sheer delight, he heard a slow step approaching, and a long-drawn-out yawn ending in a moan of utter boredom sounded close to his ear.

It was the fat passenger, still half asleep, sighing and rubbing his eyes. João de Sousa smiled at the sight, so different from the glory of the new morning.

"Well, sir, how are you? What about your tea now?"

"Oh, my dear young friend, I have really lost all hope. I have been round to that miserable little den that calls itself an inn, but there is no tea of any sort to be had there. They say no one ever asks for such a thing."

The horses had been put into the coach, and the guard gave the signal for the start. The descent of the steep mountain-side was begun at a breakneck pace, for the horses were fresh and had been given a good meal of oats. The dark forest of pine trees opened on

each side, letting the long white road appear, and soon other kinds of vegetation came into sight as the coach went downwards: olives, cork oaks, and orange trees. The vines were higher and thicker as the valley came in sight now, and presently the travellers were passing through the luxuriant vineyard country of the Douro.

The road curved along to the mountain foot, through hamlets and villages, continuing its course along one of the banks of the broad river which gives its name to the province. The slow majestic Douro kept them company with its silvery flood for many a mile, until the houses grew thicker and the vineyards gave place to gardens and orchards. At last with a rattle and a loud blast of the horn the coach entered the white streets of Regoa. It was just half-past eight in the morning, the right hour for breakfast.

As the coach drew up at the hotel—no country inn now, but an imposing three-storeyed building with green shutters and a vine-shaded verandah—the fat passenger turned to João de Sousa with a beaming smile.

"I am infinitely obliged to you, sir, for all your courtesy. I should have had a dreadful journey indeed if it had not been for your agreeable company. I cannot tell you how much I have suffered by the series of misfortunes which have deprived me of my cup of tea, which I have missed so terribly. It does not do to give up any of one's regular habits at my age. Take my advice, sir, and do not allow anything to interfere with a habit you have formed, when it is a good one. I do so love a cup of tea after my luncheon. Now I am going to get it at last. It is late, it is true, but better late than never. Permit me to introduce myself, sir. My name is Barnabé dos Anjos; I am a native of the town of Freixo-de-Espada-à-Cinta, and I am travelling to Douro on business. I hope to meet you again, sir, and in any case I am always at your service. I wish you good luck and all prosperity, and a safe journey all along; and now I am off, my dear young friend, to drink your health in a cup of tea!"

JOAQUIM MARIA MACHADO DE ASSIZ

1839–1908

THE SICK NURSE

So you really think that what happened in my life in 1860 might form part of a book. Well, you are welcome to make what use you like of it, provided only you do not publish a word of it whilst I am still alive. That is not much to ask, for I think I may have only a week to live—perhaps even less. I am very near the end, at any rate.

Of course I could tell you the story of my whole life, which has many interesting things in it; but for that I would need time, energy, and paper, and of those three things I have only paper: my energy is gone, and my time is like a night-light at dawn. The sun of another day it at hand, but as yet it is hidden by mists, soon to be dispelled. Farewell, my dear friend; pardon my faults and think of me kindly when I see you no longer. You have asked me for a human document, and here it is. Do not ask me for the Empire of the Grand Mogul or for the portrait of the Maccabees, for I cannot give them to you. But if you care to have dead men's shoes you can soon have mine, and no one else will get them if you want them.

You know already that what I am going to tell you happened in 1860. The year before that I was forty-two years of age in the month of August, and I became a theologian. That is to say, I copied out theological works for a certain Father de Nitheroy, who had been a colleague of mine at college, in return for which service he gave me shelter and food.

One day my patron, the priest, received a letter from the parish priest of a small provincial town, asking if he could recommend some discreet, experienced, and patient person who would go as sick nurse to Colonel Felisberto, of his parish, in return for a good salary. The priest asked me if I would like to go, and I gladly agreed, being already heartily tired of copying Latin texts and Church dogmas. I went to the capital to see my brother, and then I went on to the provincial town.

There I learned something more about the Colonel. He was, it

seemed, an awful man, ill-tempered, selfish, and overbearing, so that no one liked him, not even his own circle of acquaintances. He used up more nurses than medicines. He had given a sound thrashing to two of them. In reply to all this I said that I was not afraid of any one in good health, let alone of an invalid, and after a conversation with the parish priest, who confirmed all I had been told of the Colonel, and recommended me to be patient and charitable in my new undertaking, I set out for the Colonel's house.

He was sitting on the verandah in an arm-chair, and his reception of me was not disagreeable. At first he did not say anything, but looked me over narrowly. Then a sort of malicious grin distorted his hard features, and he began to talk. He talked about his previous nurses, none of whom, he said, were good for anything. All they could do was sleep and idle away their time, and he was glad to get rid of them all.

"Are you a lazy dog too?" he asked.

"No, sir," I replied to this delicate question.

He asked me my name, and I told him it was Procopio José Gomes Valongo. He made a gesture of horror, saying that it was not a name for a Christian man, but that he would call me Procopio, to which I answered that he could call me what he wished. I do not know why I chronicle this trifle, but I think the Colonel had a better opinion of me after I had given him this reply. At any rate, I found afterwards that he told the parish priest that he liked me better at first sight than any of the nurses he had had so far. And for at least a week we got on together like turtle-doves.

After that my life began to resemble that of my predecessors: a dog's life, neither more nor less. No peace for a moment, no sleep at night, and insults hurled at me all the time. I usually smiled at these, and I found that this seemed to flatter my tyrant. He considered it a tribute to his ingenuity in inventing forms of abuse. I did not really resent his behaviour, for I knew that it was caused by his illness and his peculiar temperament. The illness was a complicated one, almost a rosary of evils—aneurism, rheumatism, and half-a-dozen other attendant diseases. He was nearly sixty years of age, and he had been spoiled all his life, as child, boy, and man. If he had been merely wilful, it would have been bad enough, but he was that and more. He had naturally an evil disposition, delighting in inflicting and witnessing suffering and humiliation on all who came within his reach. At the end of three months, in spite of my philosophy, I began to find the strain too great, so I just awaited the opportunity of making my escape.

The opportunity was not long in coming. One morning I had made his poultice a little warmer than he liked, and he jumped out of bed, seized his stick, and struck me several blows. I gave him

notice at once, and went to my room to pack my clothes. To my surprise he followed me, knocking at the door and asking humbly if he might come in.

He begged me to stay, urging that he was old and lonely, and that it was not worth my while to leave him just because of a temper which was not really his own, but had been inherited from others, and which he had never been trained to curb. I saw the logic of this, and I agreed to stay.

" It will not last long, Procopio," he said to me. " I am too ill to live much longer. I am here, but I shall soon be in my coffin, and you will have the pleasure of being at my funeral and knowing that I am powerless to annoy you any more. Perhaps you will say a prayer for my repose in the next world, for I shall need it. I have never had any rest here. If you do not come and pray for me, I swear that I will come back from the grave and haunt you. Do you believe that souls can come back from the other world, Procopio? "

" No, I do not."

" Then you are a fool! Why should you not believe it? Anyhow, it does not matter what idiots like you believe or do not believe. That does not alter facts. I will come back from the other world, if only to show you what an ass you are! "

That was how we made our peace, so you can imagine what our war had been like. He did not strike me again, but he overwhelmed me with abuse and bad names His temper seemed to grow worse from day to day. I made up my mind to take no notice, and I even amused myself by making a list of the names I was called. Never had any attendant on a cranky invalid such an assortment of titles. I was an ass, a camel, a son of an ass, an idiot, a monkey; in fact, in my own person, according to my gentle employer, I could have filled a whole menagerie.

The Colonel had no relatives; he was really quite alone in the world. He had a few acquaintances who came now and then to pay him a visit of a few minutes' duration, to inquire how he was, and then to depart after hearing a catalogue of his troubles. I sometimes thought they came for the fun of the thing, to be able to laugh at him afterwards at their Club. Certainly they did not come for pleasure in his company.

I felt terribly lonely, and more than once I made up my mind to leave. But each time I went to see the parish priest, and he always advised me to remain.

One of my troubles was that there did not really seem to be any prospect of release in the way of which my patient sometimes spoke. The chain of his diseases seemed to bind him closer to life instead of freeing him from what was a burden to himself and a misery to others. I was myself forty-two years of age, and did not

want to waste all my life in bearing the ferocity of a tyrannical invalid in the seclusion of a little country town.

To give you an idea of my loneliness, I could not even see a newspaper, for the Colonel would not suffer any in his house. He took no interest in anything except his own afflictions, and it was only when the parish priest showed me his own newspaper that I had any idea of what was going on in the outer world. I had not even an opportunity of spending my salary, which the Colonel paid me regularly. Meanness was not one of his many faults.

In spite of the parish priest, I had made up my mind to go, when suddenly the Colonel grew worse. He decided to make his will, and that was a terrible business, for he insulted the lawyer almost as much as he was in the habit of insulting me. From that time onwards he never had any intervals of rest at all, nor did he give me a moment's peace. I was unable to control my nerves; I conceived an abhorrence of him which was an absolute torture to me, and I considered that, as a Christian man, it was my plain duty to leave him. I told the parish priest that I would go in a month's time; and, after vainly endeavouring to make me change my mind, he agreed to look out for a successor to me.

What I am going to tell you now happened on the twenty-fourth of August, at night. The Colonel was in his usual fit of rage. He called me every name he could put his tongue to, threatened to break my neck, and flung a plate of soup at me, because he said it was cold. I had brought it to him warm, and he had let it grow cold purposely. The plate missed me and struck the wall, breaking in pieces, and scattering the soup over the carpet.

About eleven o'clock he raved himself to sleep. I had borrowed a novel from the parish priest, an old romance by d'Arlincourt, and I sat reading it in the Colonel's room, near his bed, for I should have to wake him during the night to give him his medicine. But before I had read two pages, the letters swam before my eyes, and I must have fallen asleep.

I was awakened by the shouts of the Colonel, and I sprang up in terror. He continued to call out, apparently in delirium; and as I approached him, dazed with sleep, he stretched out his hand, seized his stout stick, and struck me with all his might across the face.

I was blinded and maddened by the force of the blow. I was in such a mad fury that I sprang on my patient; we struggled together, and I seized him by the throat and put my knee on his chest. He ceased to struggle, moaned feebly, and lay still. When I drew back and looked at him, I saw that he was dead.

I uttered a cry of horror, but no one heard me. I returned to the bedside and did all in my power to restore animation, but in vain. His aneurism had burst, and the Colonel was dead. I went

into the next room and stayed there for two hours, not daring to move, waiting, waiting. I cannot even tell you what I felt during all this time, for I seemed to be stupefied, dazed, and only half conscious. I seemed to see figures bending towards me from the walls, and hoarse voices cried out to me. The cries of my victim, both before and during the struggle, resounded in my ears unceasingly, and the very air appeared heavy and full of throbbing forms. I am sure I did not imagine all this; the whole place was full of menacing shapes, and of voices which called out to me, "Murderer, murderer!"

In the next room all was still. The slow ticking of the clock seemed to accentuate the stillness, so distinct did it sound. I listened in vain, not daring to go in. There was no movement, no sigh. How gladly I would have welcomed a word of insult, a cry of abuse, such as I had for so long been used to hear. But nothing came to reassure me, to ease my conscience, and still my terror and remorse. I walked up and down the room, stopping to listen every now and then, and wishing I had never been born. Why had I ever taken such a place? What was left to me to do now? And still the moving shapes, the accusing voices!

I blamed myself, the parish priest, the doctor, even Father de Nitheroy, who had first told me of this awful task. They were all my partners in guilt, I thought. All had led up to the awful death of the Colonel.

I ventured to open one of the windows to listen to sounds from without, but all was deathly still; not even a breath of wind stirred. The night was calm; the stars shone in their aloofness from all earthly trouble, indifferent to everything here below. I lay down on the couch and began to go over all that had happened in my life, so as to get some momentary escape from the present misery. It was only then that the thought came into my mind that I should be punished for what I had done. Fear came to add to remorse; and I felt what it was to have a crime on my conscience, and to know that I must certainly pay the penalty of having committed it. I seemed to see the shadowy forms still wandering round me, and then mounting and disappearing into the air, only to return and look at me malevolently, with murmurs of reproach.

I bathed and dressed my wounded face, and then I thought I would venture to go into the Colonel's room once more. I hesitated at the door, shrank back several times, and clung to the handle of the door, trying to steady my trembling limbs, to quiet my throbbing heart. I thought of flight, but I had sense enough to know that such a course would convict me irrefutably. Better stay and see what could be done.

I forced myself to look at the Colonel. He lay back with eyes glazed and mouth wide open, as if to speak the accusing words

which have echoed down the centuries: "Cain, what hast thou done to thy brother?"

I could see the marks of my fingers on his throat. Almost without knowing what I did, I buttoned up his night-shirt and drew the sheet up to his chin. Then summoning all my resolution, I called a servant, told him that my patient had died suddenly in the night, and told him to fetch the doctor and the parish priest.

I thought first of all of going away before they could arrive, under the pretext that my brother was very ill, and that I was obliged to go to him at once. Indeed, they knew that he was ill, for I had received a letter to that effect a couple of days before, and had told the parish priest that it gave me an additional reason for wishing to leave the Colonel's service. But no, I could not risk awakening suspicion, so I stayed.

To my great surprise the doctor did not examine the corpse, beyond ascertaining that life was gone. He took my word for the fact that the Colonel had awakened from sleep, shouting as if in pain, and had died as soon as I reached the bedside. He had long been dangerously ill, and an aneurism may be fatal at any time. So he certified the death, and all preparations were made for the funeral.

I prepared the corpse for the coffin myself, with the aid of an old negress who was almost blind and performed her task almost instinctively from long habit. I did not dare to leave the death chamber, dreading that some discovery would be made. I watched the faces of those who came and went, in furtive anxiety, seeking to read what they thought. Everything made me impatient; the coming and going of the servants, of the doctor, the prayers of the parish priest, all the sad ceremonies which herald the final disappearance.

At last the hour arrived; the coffin was brought in, and I lifted the corpse into it myself and closed the lid with hands which trembled, so that one of the persons present whispered to another:

"See that poor man who was the Colonel's nurse. He has a good heart, for he seems so grieved, although every one knows that he has suffered a great deal at the old man's hands"

How I longed for the whole thing to be over, before I lost self-control and risked being found out. Heaven knew I had not intended to kill my employer, but who would believe it? The men came to bear the coffin to the hearse, and we passed into the street. The bright daylight after the gloom of the house of death struck me like a blow. I felt as if all must be made clear, as if even the secrets of the closed coffin would be revealed by that brilliant daylight.

I paced along beside the hearse. I have already said that the Colonel had no relatives; so there were no mourners but myself,

the parish priest, the doctor, and the couple of servants who had lived in another part of the house. A few of the dead man's acquaintances accompanied the funeral, more out of idleness than out of respect for the Colonel, who had never won any man's friendship.

At last all was over. I left the grave-side with an immense feeling of relief. I was at peace with men, though not with God on my conscience, and for several nights I could not sleep. I left the little town as soon as possible, and came to Rio de Janeiro, where I lived almost in seclusion, eating little, scarcely speaking, never smiling, and a prey to the strangest visions and delusions.

"It is wrong of you to take things like that," said my acquaintances to me. "You did your duty to the dead man, and you should not grieve for him so much."

I kept up the idea of inordinate grief for my late employer. I praised him continually, saying that he was a good soul, a little rough and hasty, like so many old soldiers, but truly kind at heart and tried by much suffering. And by constantly repeating this, I succeeded in partly believing it myself, at any rate at times.

I have never been really a religious man, but oddly enough I felt some little consolation from being able to have a mass said for the repose of the Colonel's soul in the Church of the Holy Sacrament. I said nothing to any one but the priest about this; I had the mass said early in the morning, and I alone formed the congregation. I remained on my knees the whole time, praying fervently, and frequently making the sign of the Cross. I prayed for the repose of the dead man's soul and for my own living one. I doubled the priest's fee and put alms in all the church collection boxes. I did not do this to impress any one, for no one was there to see it. I did it to try to ease my own tortured mind.

After this, I always appeared to cease to regret the Colonel, and I never spoke of his death with sadness or said "Lord have mercy on him," as we do here in speaking of the dead. I spoke of him often, but always to tell some amusing anecdote of his ways, or to recount some imaginary good deed he had done. In this way I tried to cheat myself into the belief that he was at rest, and that no real harm had been wrought by me.

A week after my arrival in Rio de Janeiro I received the letter from the parish priest which I have already shown you, telling me that the Colonel's will had been opened and that he had made me his sole heir. Imagine my surprise. I could not think I had understood aright, so I took the letter to my brother and to my friends; all read it in the same way. There was no doubt about it; the Colonel had left me everything he possessed.

At first I imagined that this was a trick, and that the unfortunate incidents of the Colonel's death had been discovered; but I soon

reflected that there would be simpler means of trapping me than this. And the parish priest was honesty and probity personified, so that he would never lend himself to a subterfuge of this kind. I read and re-read the letter many times; its contents were plain enough.

"How much did he leave?" my brother asked me.

"I do not know, but he was believed to be rich."

"Well, he must have liked you"

"I suppose he did. . . . I did not know."

And so in this unexpected way the Colonel's possessions came into my hands. I wondered whether I ought not to refuse the legacy. It seemed hateful to me to receive it in such a way; I felt even meaner than if I had stolen the old man's money in his lifetime, for then he would have known of it. I considered the whole thing for three days, and finally decided that if I refused the legacy, my doing so might arouse some kind of suspicion. I resolved to effect a compromise with my conscience; I would accept the legacy, but I would secretly give it all away in charity, and with the intention of appeasing the Colonel's spirit, if he should know what had occurred. It would all be offered for the repose of his soul. I must tell you that I did not decide in this way through any real scruple, but because I thought my crime might be wiped out by an act of self-sacrifice. In this way accounts would be squared.

I prepared to start for the little provincial town to claim my inheritance. Everything seemed to come back to me as I approached the place; the whole tragedy rushed back into my mind, and every bush I passed appeared to conceal the shadow of the Colonel. In imagination I went over all the horror, the despair, of that awful night on which I had committed the crime.

Was it really a crime or a justifiable homicide? As a matter of fact, the Colonel had attacked me, and as he was in delirium, I had but tried to defend myself from his fury. It was an unfortunate struggle, for it ended in a swift tragedy. I resolved to keep this idea before me; and I summed up all the sufferings I had undergone in that man's service; all the insults, all the miseries of my lonely life. I had wished to leave him, and he had prevented it. Was it not the hand of Fate which had struck him down, using me as the instrument only?

As the station of the little town came near, I felt that I would not leave it. I would take the next train back to the capital. However, I crushed down this idea too, and went to the house of the parish priest, where I was made very welcome. He told me the dispositions of the will, the charges which it enjoined on me, and he went on to praise the Christian patience and the self-sacrifice with which I had performed a task which had earned so much

gratitude from a man of the Colonel's hard and exacting temperament. I must often have found the position unbearable, but at any rate I had the comfort of knowing I had done my duty.

"Yes . . . no doubt," I said, looking away out of the window.

Every one else spoke to me in the same way. All were glad that my great patience and devotion had been rewarded. I had to hear this constantly, for the requirements of the administration of the property obliged me to remain for some time in the town. I appointed a lawyer to act for me, and everything seemed to go on smoothly. The lawyer had known the Colonel well, and he spoke of him to me very often, but without the moderation of the parish priest.

I defended my old master. It was the least I could do.

"He was not really bad natured. It is true he was a trifle severe."

"Severe, indeed! It was high time he died. He was just a devil, neither more nor less."

He went on to tell me many things which had happened before I had come to the place, incivilities of the Colonel's, brutalities towards his servants and his nurses. I listened to all and felt a strange pleasure in excusing all, finding reasons for all, perhaps local jealousies because he did not belong to the place, and the people had not known how to appreciate him. He was a little violent in his ways, but that was only his manner, and so on.

Every one was of the same opinion. The dead Colonel was a poisonous serpent, and his behaviour had always been atrocious. He had not a single friend; what would have become of him if it had not been for my care? If he did leave me his property, he had good reason to do so. Who else would have remained with him so long and closed his eyes with such pious devotion at the last?

All this praise had its effect on me. I began to feel that they were right. The Colonel was well out of the world, and his money was in good hands now.

The task of making out the list of property occupied and interested me, and I remained on in the town, even spending some time every day in the house from which I had been so glad to make my escape not long before. It had been left to me with the other property, and I intended to sell it and return to live in the capital, when I had realised all my possessions and converted all into money and investments.

After some months had passed, I had become so much accustomed to the house where I had lived more and more regularly, that I no longer thought of disposing of it. I did not even think seriously now of giving away all my legacy in charity. I began to think that this would be a piece of needless affectation. I would rebuild some of the cottages in the village, give a sum to the local schools,

and have a grand High Mass said by the parish priest publicly for the repose of the soul of my lamented benefactor, as I had come to speak of him and indeed to regard him. And I sent to Rio for a celebrated sculptor, a Neapolitan, who was working at the cathedral there, and got him to erect a fine marble tomb in the graveyard over that grave where I had stood some months before in fear and trembling. No fear of the Colonel's bones being disturbed now!

Years went by in this way, and the memory of my first agony of grief and remorse had long since grown dim. I had come to think kindly of the dead man, who had rewarded my faithful services so justly. I no longer thought of him with terror or remorse; scarcely even with regret. I often spoke of him to those who had not known him, always in terms of praise. When chance brought me in the path of a doctor, I recounted to him my patient's illness and the details of his sufferings. All agreed that he could not have lasted longer; it was only by a miracle and on account of the patient care I gave him that he had lasted even so long.

Did I exaggerate his symptoms when I described them? I do not really know. It is certain that the more I thought of them and the oftener I spoke of them to those who were in a position to judge, the more certain it became that the man could not have lived another day, even if I had not had that terrible experience.

Farewell, my dear friend. If you find that this confession of mine is of any interest to you, I beg you to reward me by giving me also a marble tomb, on which you will have engraved that promise from the Divine Sermon on the Mount:

" Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

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